POLICY *Review*

APRIL & MAY 1999, NO.94

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Conservatism at Century's End

A Prospectus

FOR BETTER OR WORSE, modern ideological conservatism constitutes a completed body of thought. We need not try to settle the issue of how it came to completion, an exercise in intellectual history a bit beyond the scope of these reflections, to note the fact. There was a time, coming to a close perhaps a decade ago, when those of us who took an interest in the development of conservative ideology eagerly reached for our newly arrived periodicals and newly published books in the expectation of finding bold new insights into vexing problems, some of which we did not even realize were problems. This was an exciting time — conservative ideology was a work in progress, and the task had urgency, vitality, and freshness. Part of the task was the development of a thorough critique of liberal and radical ideology and the effects these had throughout our politics and culture. But conservative ideology was not merely negative — merely based in criticism. It had a positive component as well, laying claim to a future it proposed to make better through the defeat of radicalism, the rejection of liberalism, and the implementation of conservative ideas in the policy arena.

This period of intellectual ferment is over. In a way, that is a tribute to its success. One can say of ideological conservatism nowadays that, in general, it knows what the important questions are and it knows the answers to those questions. There remains much detail to work out, but the outlines are clear. Conservatives resolve arguments in favor of the individual rather than the collective, of clear standards of judgment rather than relativistic measures, of personal responsibility rather than the interplay of vast social forces, of the market rather than government economic intervention, of international strength and self-reliance rather than empty promises of security. The federal government is, in general, too big, taxing too much of the wealth of Americans, doing too many unnecessary and often counterproductive things that get in the way of economic growth, to say nothing of personal liberty. Even as it has indulged in frivolity, the federal government has

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been neglectful of the security of Americans in its rush to disarm after the successful conclusion of the Cold War. Meanwhile, a debased high and popular culture shows few signs of recovery.

Among conservatives, one is hard-pressed to find any disagreement on these basic issues. The real questions, instead, are whether, when, and how the American political process will make good on the promises of conservatism. In certain respects, this is a tribute to the triumph of conservative ideology. In the absence of its searching critique of liberalism and its advancement of an alternative vision, it seems unlikely that the old liberal dominance would have faded as it has. The practical import of this triumph is that conservative ideology is no longer merely a theoretical matter. Conservatives would like to implement it, to substitute their ideas for the dead hand of liberalism that guided our politics for decades. The principal activity of ideological conservatism at century's end takes place not in the realm of ideas, but in the world of politics.

The conservative intellectual culture

THE CHARACTERISTIC FIGURES of conservative intellectual culture are no longer professors and intellectuals. The characteristic figures are lawyers and journalists. This, as much as anything, is an indication of how far conservatism has come.

Making the law and reporting on how the law is or isn't getting made: In some ways, these seem the principal activities of idea-minded conservatives nowadays. Once again, this may be a product of the success of the intellectual endeavor, over the years, in asking and answering the basic questions. But there are no more basic questions to ask and answer, or so it seems, and so it seems neither inappropriate nor terribly significant that for those interested in the life of the mind these days, at least outside the academy, action consists of either a seat at the table where the big decisions are being made; or a place at the peephole into the room with the table, in order to describe it for others (and second-guess it).

The conservative intellectual culture reflects the broader media culture around us. That broader culture now worships two principal deities: Much and Quick. Our culture produces an extraordinary volume of information for anyone interested in consuming information. Never have so many had so much access to so much, nor so quickly. What is a media culture to do in the age of the Internet and 24-hour cable programming on politics? The answer has been: Go along with it. In addition to a new breed of on-line "magazines" whose content changes from hour to hour, we have seen biweekly, weekly, and daily publications break out of their traditional "news cycle" to give us the benefit of their reporting and analysis as soon as they can post it on their web sites. Conservatism, for its part, is now propagated as much by simultaneous e-mail transmission as by any other medium. To be *au courant*

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is to answer a liberal argument made on a morning cable show by early afternoon. It may, however, be an indication of how well-formed conservative thought is that it can propagate answers so quickly.

The questions to the answers

Is anything wrong with this? On one hand, no. In the first place, there is no undoing the profusion of cable or the availability of the Internet. We live in our time. It would be the height of folly to cede such powerful tools as the Internet and cable to people out to do in the conservative project. As long as these media are available, it only makes sense to seize them and use them the best one can. In the second place, the sometimes-rote quality of the propagation of conservatism and conservative positions is hardly the product of imposition of intellectual orthodoxy by some central committee taking as its charge the enforcement of discipline among the cadres. There is no such committee. Instead, the familiar quality of conservatism is a product of widespread agreement among thoughtful people. Its completed character is testimony to the sway of reason among reasonable people.

But is a swift and certain conservatism, even if such a conservatism is essential, actually sufficient? Here, there is reason to pause.

The long-term success of conservative ideology depends on how well that ideology understands and describes the world and predicts outcomes in it. If, in point of fact, conservative ideology is perfectly formed at present, then there is no particular risk in the current state of conservative intellectual culture. But if not, then what? And how will conservatives know?

The liberal experience should send a cautionary signal to conservatives. Liberalism as an ideology proved remarkably disinclined to engage in self-examination. The intellectual energy of liberalism was largely taken up in a decades-long argument between the go-fast liberals and the one-step-at-a-time liberals. Liberalism had no particular response to external pressure, either in the form of the failure of the world to act in accordance with its expectations or in the form of the conservative intellectual critique of liberalism during the heyday of the formation of conservative ideology. Liberalism, comfortable in the wielding of political power, simply did so — until there came the point at which it lost political power as a result of the bankruptcy, insufficiency, and stubborn wrong-headedness of its ideas.

Liberalism would surely have been better off had some substantial number of its most talented adherents been able or willing to take a step back from their ideological certainty and re-examine their premises in the light of real-world results. (One could say that some liberals did take this road, only to become conservatives; on the other hand, it is hardly obvious that the only alternative to liberalism is ideological conservatism.)

Conservatives should profit from this error. Some of them ought to take it

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as a project of some urgency to step back from the now hurly-burly world of conservative political and intellectual culture and take a long, hard, detailed look at conservatism. The alternative is merely the assumption that all is well. That is a dangerous assumption. Even if all is well, it is better to say so on the basis of serious self-scrutiny than on a whim, or worse, out of the ideological conviction that all must be well. And suppose all is not well. Suppose one or another problem becomes apparent. There is at least a possibility that such problems as arise can be addressed and corrected before their steady accretion threatens the totality of the project of conservative governance.

If ideological conservatism now is relatively self-confident in the conviction that it has the right answers to the important questions, the time has come for the right questions about the answers.

Time to think

ONE THING IS CERTAIN. No serious conservative self-scrutiny will arise spontaneously from the current media culture. Rather, such scrutiny can only be a product of a deliberate decision on the part of some number of serious people to take the time to think about some pretty serious things. And the product of their deliberations will not be the least suited to delivery via sound bite or e-mail.

They will write essays. These essays will be published in a magazine that has made a deliberate decision to make its stand outside the news cycle. In a culture increasingly given to Much and Quick and more and faster, this magazine will take the radically contrarian view that seriousness necessitates deliberation, and that an article that can be read with profit and enjoyment a year or two or a dozen after it first appears is potentially at least as valuable a thing as all the e-mail traffic in between.

This magazine, in turn, will be read by people who appreciate the limitations of the media culture of Much and Quick — and the perhaps-hidden dangers this culture poses to conservatism. This magazine and its audience will, in short, constitute the dynamic element of modern conservative thinking.

Consequence

THE CREATION OF MODERN conservative ideology was an exercise in ideas — in many cases, ideas about the consequences of an older set of ideas, those of liberalism. But conservatism is no longer merely about ideas, because conservative ideas are having consequences of their own. The success or failure of conservatism, in the long run, will depend on how well conservatism understands those consequences and adapts to them.

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The project of this magazine

TO SERVE as the pre-eminent vehicle for new conservative thinking and new and serious thinking about conservatism.

TO MONITOR the progress of conservative ideology as it moves from the realm of theory to the world of practice, the political world.

TO RE-EXAMINE as necessary the premises, logic, and conclusions of conservative thinking in order to ensure that conservatism remains intellectually rigorous and vital.

TO CREATE or re-create a community of conservative thinkers and writers capable of bringing to the challenges of the present the same clarity, conviction, and conscience their intellectual elders brought to bear on the problems of a different time.

In a world of ephemera, it is time for some number of people to devote their energies and attention to matters of lasting consequence.

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Gingrich Lost and Found

By Tod Lindberg

It wasn't merely the political career of House Speaker Newt Gingrich that came to an abrupt end after the Republican Party's surprising losses in the November 1998 congressional elections. It was also a theory of history that died.

One might call it the world according to Gingrich, for he was surely its chief proponent and its public face. But to describe it as such runs the risk of making it seem somehow idiosyncratic, something uniquely or chiefly Gingrich's. It was anything but. What made Gingrich a leader was first and foremost his abundance of followers — lots of them, and not just in Congress or in the organized Republican Party, but including just about all those who had taken personal pleasure in the election results four years before, when Republicans won control of the House for the first time in 40 years. This was his doctrine and theirs, a view of progressive Republicanism, a new, ideological Republicanism on the march. True, by 1998, many of Gingrich's followers (inside and outside Congress) had turned on him. And not for quite a while has it been possible for Republicans and conservatives to hear the words "Republican Revolution" without cringing in embarrassment. But the truth is that not so many years ago, the phrase quite accurately captured their frame of mind, their own sense of who they were and what they were up to. The 1994 GOP electoral triumph, which they felt as their own, they recognized also as his. Those who knew Gingrich personally knew all about his personal eccentricities, his vanities, his intellectual conceits. But those things didn't matter so much next to the bigger things Gingrich represented and the political achievement he had just brought off. Gingrich was no less than the chief theorist, lead strategist and tactician, and principal spokesman of the activist Republican Party, manifesting itself in 1994 as Republican Revolution.

This doctrine of Republican progress was ideological, conservative, pop-

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ulist, and triumphalist in character — each a quality that found its personification in the man on point, Newt, now Speaker Gingrich.

The conservatism is perhaps the most obvious, certainly the element most visible to liberals and Democrats. In 1994, it came with an official document, the Contract with America. In it, GOP members of the House and aspiring Republican candidates pledged to hold votes in the first 100 days of a Republican-majority Congress on a slew of stalwart conservative issues, including balancing the budget, cutting taxes, reining in entitlement programs, ending welfare, and getting tough on crime. Conservatives came in various stripes in 1994, as they do now, ranging from libertarian to the religious right. This was, however, a document they could all agree on. If the idea was gimmicky, and it was, it nonetheless served as their own internal organizing principle and program of action. They rallied around it, and their opponents rallied against it.

It wasn't merely a political career that came to an end in 1998.

This conservatism was anti-Washington. In part, it was a product of the equation in the minds of conservatives of the nation's capital and liberalism, against which conservatism had arisen. Washington, the thinking went, was out of touch with the concerns of Americans, and its principal product, big government, was a negative influence on their lives. Gingrich, who first came to fame leveling the corruption charges that toppled House Speaker Jim Wright in 1989, saw the delegitimation of Washington as essential to conservative change. Wright's corruption was of a piece with a Washington culture of corruption, itself the product of liberal policy and arrogant one-party control.

The anti-Washington character of conservatism was also a solution to a practical political problem: It united the various strains of conservatism. Whatever particular issue a conservative activist cared about, a bigger federal government was not the solution and was in the activist view probably contributing to the problem in the first place. Those who felt they had a personal stake in Washington and a bigger federal government were not conservative and would not be voting Republican; they were, in the Gingrichian view, the Democrats' natural constituency. But as government had grown and with it grievances against the actions of government on a thousand different fronts, the pro-Washington constituency was no longer necessarily a majority. An anti-Washington coalition might supplant it.

If conservatism was the most visible feature of Republicanism on the march, the Revolution's ideological character was its most important feature. Modern conservatism bears little relation to most of the things that have gone by the name of "conservative" over the generations, and the reason is its ideological character. Michael Oakeshott once wrote that conservatives believe this is the best of all possible worlds — not because they admire

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the present, but out of certitude that things will get worse. William F. Buckley Jr., in much the same vein, wrote that it was the task of conservatives to stand athwart history and shout, "Stop!" Neither sentiment could be more at odds with the sensibility of modern ideological conservatism.

This was conservatism with an action agenda, a conservatism that was disinclined to look back on the past with a sense of nostalgia, let alone with a desire to recreate some long-gone world, but rather one that envisioned a better future created by conservative reform. This ideological view was comprehensive; its adherents believed they had worked out the answers to the major policy questions facing the country. And while this view did indeed see the federal government as the source of many of the nation's troubles, it did not hold that the problem was federal power as such. Change those wielding federal power, and the power could be harnessed to the ends of conservative reform.

GINGRICH WAS CONSERVATIVE ideology in the flesh. He was, of course, trained as a historian. He may have lacked particular academic distinction, but he did not lack for intellectual ambition. His speeches were fraught with historical allusions; he was a tireless miner of the past for insights into the present, for past patterns repeating themselves, for large historical forces and great trends. He had an autodidact's undiscriminating, catholic taste in intellectual matter. He found wisdom in the Federalist Papers as well as Alvin and Heidi Toffler, whose "Third Wave" intellectual quackery enjoyed a brief flurry of attention thanks to its influence on his thinking.

Gingrich had, above all, an ideologue's sense of the connectedness of things. This quality often allowed him to dazzle an audience, especially one that shared his generally conservative views, and even more so an audience of like-minded conservative ideologues. He was comfortable discussing history in sweeping terms organized around great themes — the progress of the liberal welfare state, its progressive corruption, the American people's mounting estrangement from it. His frame of mind was such that a notorious murder in the suburbs of Chicago, in which a woman nine months pregnant was shot to death and her baby cut from her womb, was naturally a product of the welfare state and its deformations of our culture and those caught up in it. Gingrich's critics, in this instance, accused him of using a tragedy to score cheap political points. If that is as much as there was to it, it would hardly be the first time a politician was guilty of such a sin. But in Gingrich's case, the charge missed the mark. He was not being cynical; he was trying to help people understand what he thought had really happened.

Naturally, he explained things in ideological terms. An ideology is a closed system; there is nothing the ideology cannot explain. How could there be? An ideology is, in essence, a view of the whole. And with the ability to explain, more often than not comes the urge to explain. Gingrich viewed himself first and foremost as a teacher — although evangelist might be closer to the mark. Our chief national problem, as he saw it — namely, that voters kept electing

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Democratic Congresses — was largely a result of the fact that they had not had matters properly explained to them nor issues properly framed for them. In one particularly florid schematic Gingrich drew on a notepad to illustrate his role, his task was to civilize the nation; he would teach and train others, and using whatever media were available, together they would reform the nation by extending the influence of his ideas. The college course he taught (and used tax deductible contributions to distribute, leading to a slew of ethics charges against him) wasn't just a fillip of academic vanity. Its teacher hoped those who watched it would be wooed to his project of "Renewing American Civilization." The course title referred not just to a lofty goal but also to an intended outcome once enough people got the message. Gingrich was, in his own view, a transformational figure.

He had an autodidact's taste in intellectual matter.

And so he explained — and explained and explained. In the first year of the 104th Congress, he was everywhere explaining. Sometimes, as in the case of the Chicago murder, the explanation was in questionable taste. Sometimes, as in the notorious incident in which he complained about President Clinton not inviting him to the front of Air Force One to discuss the budget on the way back to Washington from Yitzhak Rabin's funeral, his explanation of historical precedent came off as whining over a personal affront. Sometimes, as in the televised press briefings he conducted daily before abandoning them as counterproductive, he would allow himself to be baited by reporters, drawn into colloquies with them in which he sought to explain why their questions were a product of liberal bias. He would describe at length why media hostility made it so hard for conservatives to get their message out. As the cameras rolled on and the complaint continued, its substance looked more and more foolish. And sometimes, the mere act of explaining was too much; he was overexposed.

For all these reasons, from time to time his fellow Republicans begged him to shut up, and at times he obliged them. But this in turn set another fascinating dynamic in motion. For no sooner had Gingrich kept quiet for a while than Republican cries of "Where's Newt?" would ring. He was their leader, after all; how come he was ducking the hard questions? They couldn't stand all the explaining, but when Gingrich stopped explaining, suddenly they didn't have explanations. What were they doing? And why, exactly? Gingrich was the one who could best say how the pieces fit together.

Gingrich-style Republicanism's populist character was a product of both its ideology and of the rising percentage of people giving pollsters conservative answers to questions about issues. Of the two, the latter is the more straightforward phenomenon. No one seriously disputes that the country's center of political gravity has been moving rightward for some time (though the reasons for this movement and its likely duration are matters of serious debate). And increasingly, in order to tap into this sentiment and exploit it

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politically, the Republican Party has overtly identified itself as a conservative party. As ideological conservatives tell the story, the turning point was the battle for the 1964 GOP presidential nomination, when Barry Goldwater's victory wrenched control of the party from its liberal Northeast wing. Nixon, a problematic character in many ways, nonetheless recognized the political existence of a "silent majority" of Americans who opposed 1960s-style radicalism. It remained for Ronald Reagan, the story continues, to rally this constituency and turn it into a solidly anti-liberal, not just anti-radical, majority at the presidential level. Some analysts began to speak of a supposed GOP electoral lock on the White House. The congressional transformation was harder, due in part to the advantages possessed by entrenched incumbents, but also because many Democrats responded to their constituents' rightward turn by talking more conservatively while voting much the same as they always had.

Democrats were elitists, Gingrich believed, both liberal and corrupt.

But the people, in the Gingrichian view, possessed great wisdom. One could tell from their responses to such favorite Republican questions as whether federal budget deficits should continue or the budget should be balanced; whether the bureaucracy should grow larger or be cut down to size; and whether taxes should go up or down. On this reasoning, once the people knew that Republicans, not Democrats, were espousing the people's views, the people would vote Republican. There was no inherent conflict between a populist outlook and a modern Republican outlook; they were one and the same.

The Democrats were elitists, Gingrich believed. They were out of touch with what people wanted. They were the defenders of a status quo that favored them and their friends and perpetuated their own power through the power of government. Only by a constant expansion of government could they keep peace within their governing coalition. They would unhesitatingly deceive the people about their true intentions to the extent necessary to keep power. They were both liberal and corrupt. The American people were neither, and neither were Republicans.

Gingrich's description of the people's conservatism was, of course, ideological — once again, a piece of a larger whole. In a democratic society, an ideology that expects to succeed openly in the political world must necessarily be populist. Otherwise, it must be based on a successful and permanent campaign to keep people misinformed. In Gingrich's view, liberalism was an ideology based exactly on such a campaign; conservatism and the Republican Revolution, so-called, would not make war on the democratic order, as liberalism had, but restore to the people the government they really wanted.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the populist character of Gingrich's Republicanism was its candor. The premise of the Contract with America was candor itself: Politicians would, for once, mean what they said and do

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what they promised. Gingrich, once again, was at the forefront. If there were thoughts he had that he left unsaid, hidden agendas, secret strategies, and surely there were, they nevertheless could only have been but a tiny fraction of what most politicians, out of prudence, keep mum about. Gingrich spoke openly of his desire to see the Health Care Finance Administration, which administers Medicare, wither on the vine; of a reversal of U.S. China policy in favor of Taiwan; of his willingness to see the government shut down if President Clinton declined to go along with GOP spending and tax plans; of his intention to use the statutorily set debt limit as a sword of Damocles over the administration to force capitulation. His political opponents used all of these statements, and many more besides, against him — often wrenching them from their context to enhance the political damage, but not always, since in truth it wasn't always necessary. Gingrich didn't have to give them that opportunity with his candor. He could presumably have confined his didacticism to statements less potentially explosive. But he never saw them as explosive — or any more explosive than anything else he said. Gingrich said these things not out of some desire to be provocative; nor did they slip out. Rather, they were a product of his confidence that he was speaking for the people.

His political opponents, he believed, would twist his words no matter what he said, so he concluded he might as well speak the truth. He was, after all, speaker of the House, the body most directly in contact with the American electorate. From the point of view of Gingrich-style Republicanism, the takeover of the House in 1994 was evidence that the American majority had recognized that Republicans, not Democrats with their false promises, had the people's true interests at heart.

This view gave rise as well to another distinguishing characteristic of Gingrich's Republicanism: its triumphalism. This is where the talk of "Revolution" came from. Forty years of Democratic Party control was at an end, and concomitantly, 40 years of GOP control was beginning. In 1994, the American people completed their repudiation of the failed tenets of liberalism and its big-government intrusions into their lives. They recognized kindred spirits in the Republicans and welcomed a new era of conservative reform. Gingrich, the transformational leader, would consolidate the transformation. All Republicans need do was keep their promises and the people would be with them. Clinton, near death politically, would be unable to defy the people. Gingrich said after the 1994 election that if Republicans held their new majority in its first electoral test in 1996, they would rule the House for a generation.

WITH SOME JUSTIFICATION, most political commentators date the end of the "Republican Revolution" to the failed government shutdown in winter 1996. A seemingly desperately weakened Bill Clinton emerged victorious from the confrontation Republicans provoked to try to force him to agree to GOP plans for balancing the budget,

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cutting taxes, ending welfare and curtailing the cost of entitlement programs. Public opinion supported the president and blamed the Republicans for shutting down the government. In addition, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole was eager to end this damaging distraction to his presidential campaign. In the end, Gingrich, who had publicly announced the GOP strategy early on and who also believed that Congress had the upper hand in these budgetary struggles with the president, acceded to Dole's action in the Senate to reopen the government.

The experience was indeed painful for Republicans; it did indeed revitalize Clinton, now cast as the master of "triangulation," the man positioned between the extremes of conservative ideology and liberal ideology; and it did indeed begin a reappraisal of the revolutionary talk. But it did not bring a halt to Gingrich's brand of Republicanism. Rather, it set in motion a series of modifications in response to unexpected political realities.

No, it would not be so easy to halt and reverse 60 years of liberal dominance of Capitol Hill. Liberalism would not go gently into that good night. And Bill Clinton, a president whose liberalism shone brightly his first two years in office, in the GOP view, was perfectly prepared to distance himself from liberalism, steal conservative ideas and take credit for GOP reform if he had to for the sake of political survival.

So Gingrichian triumphalism started taking the long view. Perhaps the 1994 election did not, after all, mean imminent GOP dominance of the political scene and the policy agenda. The notion that Clinton would, in effect, be gone based on his own collapse into irrelevance gave way to the prognosis that he would be gone after losing a reelection bid in 1996 to the Republican candidate, who would then gladly sign into law the reform agenda of the GOP Congress. The failure of the shutdown strategy, triumphalists decided, was just that: a strategic error. It did not change the fundamentals, the vast historical forces that were moving the country away from the belief in government as the solution to social problems, from liberalism to conservatism. Victory, while it might take longer, was still assured.

As for the populist character of the Gingrich revolution, what's striking in retrospect is how little altered it was by Clinton's first successful efforts in triangulation. Republicans explained their problems by lamenting their inability to get their message out. Many of them, especially Gingrich, blamed the press for the problem. The story line about politics in the press coverage, they believed, was framed in terms favorable to Democrats and the White House. Gingrich once mused that he had never seen his press secretary, Tony Blankley, so despondent as in December 1995, when he felt he simply couldn't get so much as single good word for the GOP into the media discussion of the government shutdown. The people, in short, heard only one side of the story: the Democrats' side, whether that was through the liberal media or from Democrats directly, in the form of advocacy television ads Clinton and his allies were airing to discredit the GOP and boost the president.

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And what the people were hearing was sheer demagoguery, to boot. In the GOP view, Democrats were using classic scare tactics, trying to frighten vulnerable Americans with untrue or grossly exaggerated claims about GOP reform plans. Medi-scare, they called Democratic characterizations of their reform plans ("gutting Medicare"). Class-warfare tactics, they called Democratic dismissals of their modest tax-relief measure ("tax cuts for the rich"). Paradoxically, the success of the demagoguery in the public opinion polls was for Republicans further evidence that the people were with the GOP. The rise in Democratic support, they rationalized, was a product of a Democratic campaign of lies, distortion, and exaggeration; had Democrats told the truth, or had Republicans been able to get their message out, the people would not have supported Clinton in the showdown. The Democrats had managed to sow in people's minds some of the same confusion that had kept them in power long after the people concluded that liberalism was a failure.

It would not be so easy to halt and reverse 60 years of liberal dominance.

The conservative character of Gingrich Republicanism also underwent a transformation in the wake of the failed government shutdown. Throughout the 1994 campaign and the first year of the GOP Congress, Republicans on Capitol Hill and the outside activist base were united — first around the Contract with America, then around the necessities of balancing the budget by 2002, a project Gingrich set for Republicans immediately after the Senate failed to muster the required two-thirds vote to pass a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. The amendment might have failed, but the GOP Congress would balance the budget anyway.

After the failure of the shutdown, there were recriminations within the GOP, of course. Some of the most conservative Republicans in Congress as well as many outsiders said the big mistake was not closing the government but reopening it too soon, just as Clinton was (arguably) beginning to pay a political price. Others, including a number of Republican members of the Senate, said the GOP had interpreted its 1994 mandate from the electorate far too broadly. Voters wanted a conservative turn in government — but not one as far right as Gingrich and his allies proposed. New York Sen. Alfonse D'Amato explicitly attacked Gingrich, citing polls showing that most Americans, including those voting in 1994, had never heard of the Contract with America — let alone endorsed measures more extreme.

Interestingly enough, Gingrich probably agreed with those criticisms at the time, though he surely did not appreciate their public airing. His 1998 memoir of the early years, *Lessons Learned the Hard Way*, suggests as much. Thereafter, and much to the frustration of the community of activist outsiders, he would try to temper GOP conservatism with an insistence on political realism, the limits of the achievable. He had badly underestimated,

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Gingrich admits in his book, the strength of the president and his ability to combat Republicans. He would try not to make that mistake again. His strategy would be incremental.

Thereafter, the GOP Congress was less overtly conservative, more preoccupied with avoiding confrontation with Clinton. (With mixed success; despite themselves, for example, in 1997 Republicans picked another humiliating fight by trying to attach partisan provisions — on the census, among others — to a disaster relief bill. Clinton vetoed the bill and accused Republicans of playing politics with aid to flood victims; the GOP capitulated, and Gingrich took the heat for the blunder.) Typical of the period was GOP willingness in appropriations bills in fall 1996 to give Clinton whatever he wanted; Republicans wanted to go home and campaign. The price of peace ran to the tens of billions, and conservative activist groups on the outside squealed in protest.

The Gingrich ideology was subject to substantial revision in response to its collision with reality.

As it happened, after the shutdown failure, no subsequent legislative action of the 104th nor 105th Congresses really passed muster with the conservative activist community as a whole — with the exception of a securities-litigation reform measure passed over Clinton's veto and the successful effort to rename Washington's airport in honor of Ronald Reagan. Gingrich's biggest prize in the 104th Congress was the welfare reform legislation Clinton signed shortly before the 1996 election. It brought an end to a federal entitlement program, an unprecedented achievement. Even so, some conservatives regarded the measure as insufficient because it allowed states too much latitude to avoid tough measures to get people off welfare rolls. The balanced budget agreement reached in 1997, which capped spending, cut taxes, and included much of the entitlement reform and cost-cutting Democrats had decried in 1995, met with widespread disfavor among outside conservative groups: The spending levels were too high, they said, and the tax cut was too small and too directed toward social engineering.

Against judgments of this kind, Gingrich counseled patience; some matters took time to ripen; the electorate had not yet made up its mind that Republicans in Congress were trustworthy and responsible, especially given tireless Democratic efforts to paint Republicans as extreme and irresponsible. As he regrouped, to some he looked feckless, to others like he was abandoning conservative principle, to still others like he was now out of touch with whatever had won him the speaker's gavel in the first place. Calls among conservative outsiders for his ouster grew louder and more numerous. And some members, including some among the House GOP leadership, hatched an unsuccessful coup attempt against him.

All of this was essentially an argument over the pace of conservative

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change and the ability and willingness of the congressional GOP to serve as an agent of that change. Conservative outsiders, the activist community, were frustrated. In a sense, this was natural; after all, their role is, in part, to keep conservative pressure on their elected allies, to push them rightward against whatever counter-pressure they encounter; an attitude of contentment in the activist wing would apply no such pressure. Yet for some conservatives, frustration with the difficulty of making legislative progress in rolling back liberalism led them to regard Gingrich's conservatism as an open question.

The contention that Gingrich was no conservative was and likely will remain entirely unfathomable to liberals and most non-conservatives. For partisan Democrats, he was the poster boy of Republican extremism. Among neutral observers, he was the leader of an unruly Republican conference with a large right-wing bloc he had to appease by pursuing a right-wing course wherever he could. But some conservative activists, demanding and expecting victory sooner rather than later, saw things differently.

Their view is absurd. In truth, Gingrich by disposition was never the most conservative of right-wingers. And it's also true that he did abandon the confrontational course of the period of Republican Revolution. Moreover, he had grown attentive to the narrowness of his own majority and the strength of his opposition in the White House. On some issues, the environment for example, his newfound political realism led him to conclude that he needed a united GOP conference in order to proceed. Activists might be unhappy, but market-oriented reform, known not only to Democrats but also to some Republicans as "gutting environmental protection," would have to await a more favorable correlation of forces. But it's a sure bet that were Gingrich speaker in the 106th Congress, he would have been advocating tax cuts, defense spending increases, and private accounts for Social Security, among a number of other things no one could fail to recognize as conservative.

FROM TRIUMPHALISM to a doctrine of eventual triumph; from populist ratification of a conservative GOP agenda to a need to reconnect with and reassure the people in the face of liberal efforts to cling to power by deceit; from conservative Republican Revolution to incremental conservative change: The Gingrich ideology was subject to substantial revision in response to its collision with political reality. But it remained largely intact even through the defeat of Bob Dole and into the run-up to the 1998 congressional election.

Gingrich's public popularity might never recover from the depths to which it sank as Democrats promoted him as the chief villain of the American polity, and some conservative pundits might have been sick and tired of him. But, really, who among Republican elected leaders was better at explaining the Republican agenda than Gingrich? Surely not Bob Dole in 1996. Not Trent Lott, who was new to the scene and hardly a spellbinding orator. Nor was there anyone else of sufficient stature in the House. Even

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many of Gingrich's detractors admitted as much.

As for the insiders, the members of his conference, at least part of the reason efforts to oust him as speaker during the 105th Congress came to naught was the absence of a plausible alternative. He might not have been well-liked among other Republican members of the House; the coup attempt was a vicious reminder that the top leaders of a legislative body are not typically friends but rivals. But in the end, for the insiders, Gingrich was the one who had purged pre-1994 congressional Republicans of what he called their "minority mindset." It was he who got them to contemplate the possibility of winning control of the House and how to go about doing it. He was the one who led them to political victory and their majority in 1994 and was godfather of the huge freshman class that year. And he was the architect of the plan that retained GOP control of Congress in 1996, despite Dole's dreadful performance. Democrats had assailed him unrelentingly on ethics charges that Republicans mainly viewed as just a means to take down their leader for political reasons. And if gratitude was not enough motive, nor depriving Democrats of the biggest trophy they sought, then there was still the question of who else could hold the fractious GOP conference together. Who else could talk to the moderates and the Buchananite right and the old bulls chairing the committees, as well as the broad middle of the conference? No one had a ready answer to that question, especially not within the Republican conference.

THE ABILITY TO SUSTAIN an incremental view of conservative progress en route to eventual triumph in fulfillment of the people's wishes has, as it happens, a rather huge predicate: victories along the way. Now, over particular pieces of legislation, one can have an argument about whether they constitute victory. Conservative Gingrich skeptics might ask: Did the balanced budget act of 1997 really do much of anything to balance the budget that a surging economy wouldn't have accomplished anyway? Gingrich supporters might reply: It codified the GOP terms for keeping the budget balanced, and it cut taxes, paving the way for the fight over the next tax cut. So long as Gingrich and the GOP majority could stop what conservatives saw as egregiously bad legislation, for example a tobacco deal with a big tax increase or a campaign finance bill including public financing of campaigns, and so long as most of what did pass could at least claim to be a step in the right direction, however small, then Gingrich would have what he needed legislatively to sustain his incremental strategy.

It's not so easy to argue over what constitutes electoral victory. The results are posted in black and white, with real winners and real losers. No less than legislative progress, Gingrich needed to demonstrate political progress as well — and he firmly believed, through election day, that he would do just that in 1998 — by picking up House seats in the sixth year of the Clinton administration.

All of history told him it would be so. In the midterm election of a presi-

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dent's second term, the party of the president always loses seats in Congress. Why? Gingrich had an explanation, naturally, and it had nothing to do with the particular circumstances of Bill Clinton. It was that six years into a presidency, sufficient numbers of people will have accumulated sufficient grievances against the government that if they are members of the president's party, they will stay home, and if they are members of the opposition, they will turn out and register their discontent. Clinton's 1998 scandal troubles would only make this tendency more pronounced. A week before the election, Gingrich was even sanguine about the GOP failure to pass a tax cut in 1998. While in an ordinary year, he said, the failure to do so might hurt Republicans with the GOP base, this year the base had other reasons to be worked up about Clinton.

The results in November 1998 just weren't spinnable (not that Gingrich didn't try).

As it happened, Gingrich and his allies did have some experience spinning an electoral result: 1996. Republicans lost about half their House majority in tandem with Bob Dole's defeat. But they portrayed the congressional elections (in which the GOP picked up a couple Senate seats) as the electorate's reaffirmation of the Republican majority. The reaffirmation, they said, was all the more remarkable for Dole's poor showing. They had absorbed everything the Democrats had to throw at them, and they had survived. In this sense, they didn't lose; they won.

The results in November 1998 just weren't spinnable with that kind of argument (not that Gingrich didn't try, lamely congratulating Republicans on election night on the American people's good sense in giving them a third term in the majority). The near-universal expectation among observers was that Republicans would make modest gains. The GOP spin immediately preceding the election was that even if Republicans picked up only a few seats, Democrats would begin the 106th Congress at an historic low; privately, Republicans expected to do much better. The Clinton scandal was an embarrassment to Democrats, who would express their frustration by not turning out to vote. The independents would stay home, enjoying the peace and prosperity. *Et voila.*

A five-seat loss in the House is, in general, not much. In this context, however, it was devastating. More to the point, it was well beyond the capability of Gingrich and his Republicans to explain away in terms that were consistent even with their scaled-back vision of Republican progress. There was nothing self-consoling to say. Gingrich, at the press conference he gave the day after the election, was nearly speechless. He didn't know what had happened. He said that when he woke up election morning, he was confident Republicans were about to win seats in the House. He didn't know why they didn't. He said historians and others would have to analyze the 1998 results at some length in order to make sense of them.

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This was a blunt admission that the results made no sense to him. Where was his victory? What about his lessons learned the hard way? What about the way things always were and the way they had to be?

It was all gone when the polls closed on Tuesday, November 3, 1998. And by week's end, so was Gingrich.

GINGRICH HAS SINCE been heard saying that he harbors no ill will toward Bob Livingston for challenging him for the speakership, because (Gingrich charmingly remaining Gingrichian), historically, it was the right thing for Livingston to do. It's hard to see how he could have survived the challenge, although all of his old lieutenants were gathering to help him when he announced he was giving up the position he had worked all his adult life to attain. All he had needed, really, was a win, even a small win, and his incrementalist case would have been vindicated. But he didn't get a win. And for perhaps the first time in his life, he was confronted with a political fact he couldn't account for.

Clearly, the defeat mattered. It meant something. But what?

The question fell not just to Gingrich, but to all conservatives. If Gingrich himself could not explain who he was and what he represented in American politics, then what was the explanation? Clearly, it was necessary to reassess what had been happening. If he was not the chief architect of a national political makeover, was he then merely the master of GOP delusion at a time when Republicans, for reasons having little to do with him, got lucky at the polls?

For example, 1999 began in unprecedented prosperity at home and quiet abroad. Yet notwithstanding that Bill Clinton was beginning his seventh year in office, he got little credit from conservatives for the peace and prosperity. Rather, he was the lucky fellow who got to be president at the end of the Cold War and the dawn of the age of the central bankers.

It's not hard to construct a similar explanation for the 1994 results. Bill Clinton campaigns as a centrist, a New Democrat, but upon taking office he lurches left, bringing liberal social issues to the forefront (gays in the military, abortion rights protection), as well as a traditional Democratic approach to the budget deficit (a tax increase). To top it off, he proposes a grand health insurance "reform" beyond the reach even of a Democratic Congress; and while his goal of universal access remains popular, his plan allows all the attention to focus on the trade-offs for universal access. The 1994 election is mainly about Bill Clinton and the desire of a substantial number of Americans to put a check on him; they do so by giving Republicans control of Congress. Gingrich is the man positioned to ride the wave to shore, no more. Had it not been he, it would have been someone else.

The Gingrich-free account might continue through the present as follows: Clinton recognizes the error of his ways, but he also recognizes that Republicans have staked out an anti-government position too extreme for ordinary Americans. Capitalizing on GOP mistakes, he organizes a campaign to point this out to Americans, and he also takes measures to recapture the cen-

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ter of the political spectrum. In particular, he successfully counters the most effective Republican charge against Democrats, fiscal irresponsibility, and turns the charge against Republicans. He agrees to a balanced budget, and then urges that ensuing surpluses generated by high economic growth be reserved to address the long-term problems of Social Security. In addition, he develops a number of other, smaller government initiatives sufficiently popular to restore some measure of the public's faith in Washington.

Some of what he proposes is merely rhetoric; sometimes his actions belie his words, as in the case of domestic spending proposals that make use of funds from the budget surplus. Republicans make these points against him. But his approach is not merely rhetorical; his politics is not simply liberalism flying under a false flag. And so his party begins to regain some of the ground it had lost to the GOP — in his reelection in 1996, in the gains Democrats make in the House that year, and in the unprecedented gains they make two years later. His public support is so strong that he is able to withstand a searing year-long scandal brought on by his own irresponsible actions and his attempt to hide them, culminating in his impeachment largely along party lines.

Was Gingrich then merely the master of GOP delusion?

Where are Gingrich and the Republicans in all this? Well, they are hardly the vanguard of history's march, notwithstanding their imaginings. They are instead almost entirely a product of Bill Clinton. They are a sharp slap to his face from the right, to remind him that he must seek his political fortune not on his party's left, but in the center. The Republicans in Congress embarrass themselves by overreaching, largely on Gingrich's account, then obligingly write the legislation that enables Clinton to move to the center in a way Clinton's own party in Congress never could. Meanwhile, the Republicans chafe at Clinton's ability to win political victories over them even as he appropriates large swaths of their agenda as his own. He is infuriating.

The 1998 election is the last straw, but not just because Democrats pick up seats. It's here that Gingrich's view of Republican progress becomes relevant — because it's here that it's shattered.

Republicans no longer have a story to tell themselves about where they came from and where they are going. They continue the impeachment process independent counsel Kenneth Starr has set in motion for them, stubbornly defending a principle that seems incomprehensibly out of fashion. And at its end, with Clinton still in office, the Republican majority that began with Gingrich's Revolution in 1994 is by 1999 leaderless and characterized by qualities nearly the opposite of those with which it began. Triumphalism has given way to fatalism and foreboding; populism to an uncertain sense of where people stand and why they hold the views they do; ideology to doubt about where the nation should be going and how to move it at all;

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conservatism to the ad-hoc tactics of political survival. Where once the voice of Gingrich was ubiquitous, now there is only an awkward silence.

Is it necessary, then, to reinterpret the entire period of Republican ascendancy in the House through the lens of Bill Clinton, and never mind much about Newt Gingrich? Such a judgment is premature. But if Democrats, now firmly in possession of the electoral center as well as their own left flank, win the presidency and recapture the House in 2000, and then hold onto both past the hubristic flush of triumphalism of their own that is sure to ensue, the six-year GOP regnum will indeed look like an aberration.

And it's undeniably true that Gingrich's inability to retain the speaker's chair for all six of those years has diminished him. In 1994, as hero or villain or curiosity, he was the largest figure in American politics. Perhaps anything that bursts so spectacularly across the sky is bound to fade quickly.

Then again, it's possible that 2000 will turn out very differently and that some version of Gingrich's view of Republican and conservative progress, sans Gingrich, will be reborn, a satisfactory explanation for 1998 included. The Gingrich vision of Republicanism that flowered in 1994 did not, after all, come out of a vacuum. The story he told in 1994 had its origins 30 years earlier, when Barry Goldwater won the GOP presidential nomination and Republicans became the party of conservatism. Ronald Reagan's was the first great electoral victory of modern conservatism. Gingrich's was the second. In the context of great victories ahead, 1998 would be no more than a bump in the road.

For Republicans, one of the lessons of 1994 and 1998, considered together, is surely that permanent triumph is an extremely unlikely outcome in politics. Democrats had an opportunity to learn the same lesson in the combination of the 1992 and 1994 elections. As things turned out, it was wrong to place Gingrich at the center of a new political universe. It's equally wrong, however, to see him now as essentially a beneficiary by happenstance of a place at the center of American politics, however briefly.

Gingrich put himself there by will and hard work. The story of Republican control of the House does not begin in 1994, but years before in Gingrich's ascendancy among House Republicans. That ascendancy was a product in no small part of his vision of a Republican majority and a House he would lead as speaker. If the vision was faulty or incomplete, it nevertheless served to inspire Republicans to go about the business of preparing to be a majority. If a Republican majority required a wave to come along, it also required Republicans to be prepared for it with candidates and money and electoral plans. If Republicans over-read their mandate and overreached their grasp, they at least didn't treat their majority as an accident of history that history would soon undo. Political cowardice was not their first impulse. These are qualities that Gingrich, more than any other, was responsible for fostering.

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Nor can one say that Gingrich has nothing to show for his period at the forefront of U.S. politics. It is possible that Bill Clinton set out in 1993 to balance the budget while cutting taxes, to end the federal entitlement to welfare, to reverse the decline in military spending, and to pursue a missile defense. It is certain that Newt Gingrich set out in 1995 to do those things. It is possible that Bill Clinton set out to move his party to the right in order to accommodate the wishes of a country that had grown suspicious of doctrinaire liberalism. It is certain that the new Republican House speaker in 1995 set out to move the Democrat in the White House that way. And Democrats and Republicans alike in 1999 might ask Ronald Reagan's question from 1980 and 1984: Are they better off than they were four years ago? If the answer to that is yes, one must assign Gingrich at a minimum the role of catalyst to Clinton's reaction, and possibly a much greater role. Gingrich himself, surveying the changes in America during his tenure as House speaker, would have some reasons to be disappointed but many reasons to be pleased.

Barring the greatest political comeback of the next century, something of Churchillian proportion, Gingrich is unlikely ever to be a figure of much fondness outside the ranks of the GOP. And even among the cadre, opinions about him now are decidedly mixed. One day, though, conservatives and Republicans will probably be able to look back on 1994-95, the time of their Revolution, without a sense of pain or embarrassment or humiliation at defeat, but rather with the fondness with which one views one's youth, including its follies and delusions. There they will rediscover the Newt Gingrich they have currently lost amidst their frustration and disappointment. He could be maddening and he could be wrong, wrong, wrong, but when he was good, he was very, very good.

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Why Ritalin Rules

By MARY EBERSTADT

THERE ARE STORIES THAT are mere signs of the times, and then there are stories so emblematic of a particular time and place that they demand to be designated cultural landmarks. Such a story was the *New York Times'* front-page report on January 18 appearing under the tame, even soporific headline, "For School Nurses, More Than Tending the Sick."

"Ritalin, Ritalin, seizure drugs, Ritalin," in the words of its sing-song opening. "So goes the rhythm of noontime" for a typical school nurse in East Boston "as she trots her tray of brown plastic vials and paper water cups from class to class, dispensing pills into outstretched young palms." For this nurse, as for her counterparts in middle- and upper-middle class schools across the country, the day's routine is now driven by what the *Times* dubs "a ticklish question," to wit: "With the number of children across the country taking Ritalin estimated at well over three million, more than double the 1990 figure, who should be giving out the pills?"

"With nurses often serving more than one school at a time," the story goes on to explain, "the whole middle of the day can be taken up in a school-to-school scurry to dole out drugs." Massachusetts, for its part, has taken to having the nurse deputize "anyone from a principal to a secretary" to share the burden. In Florida, where the ratio of school nurses to students is particularly low, "many schools have clerical workers hand out the pills." So many pills, and so few professionals to go around. What else are the authorities to do?

Behold the uniquely American psychotropic universe, pediatrics zone — a place where "psychiatric medications in general have become more common in schools" and where, in particular, "Ritalin dominates." There are by now millions of stories in orbit here, and the particular one chosen by the *Times* — of how the drug has induced a professional labor shortage — is no doubt

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an estimable entry. But for the reader struck by some of the facts the *Times* mentions only in passing — for example, that Ritalin use more than doubled in the first half of the decade alone, that production has increased 700 percent since 1990, or that the number of schoolchildren taking the drug may now, by some estimates, be approaching the *4 million* mark — mere anecdote will only explain so much.

Fortunately, at least for the curious reader, there is a great deal of other material now on offer, for the explosion in Ritalin consumption has been very nearly matched by a publishing boom dedicated to that same phenomenon. Its harbingers include, for example, Barbara Ingersoll's now-classic 1988 *Your Hyperactive Child*, among the first works to popularize a drug regimen for what we now call Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD, called ADHD when it includes hyperactivity). Five years later, with ADD diagnoses and Ritalin prescriptions already rising steeply in the better-off neighborhoods and schools, Peter D. Kramer helped fuel the boom with his bestselling *Listening to Prozac* — a book that put the phrase "cosmetic pharmacology" into the vernacular and thereby inadvertently broke new conceptual ground for the advocates of Ritalin. In 1994, most important, psychiatrists Edward M. Hallowell and John J. Ratey published their own bestselling *Driven to Distraction: Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder from Childhood to Adulthood*, a book that was perhaps the single most powerful force in the subsequent proliferation of ADD diagnoses; as its opening sentence accurately prophesied, "Once you catch on to what this syndrome is all about, you'll see it everywhere."

Behold the uniquely American psychotropic universe, pediatrics zone.

Not everyone received these soundings from the psychotropic beyond with the same enthusiasm. One noteworthy dissent came in 1995 with Thomas Armstrong's *The Myth of the ADD Child*, which attacked both the scientific claims made on behalf of ADD and what Armstrong decried as the "pathologizing" of normal children. Dissent also took the form of wary public pronouncements by the National Education Association (NEA), one of several groups to harbor the fear that ADD would be used to stigmatize minority children. Meanwhile, scare stories on the abuse and side effects of Ritalin popped out here and there in the mass media, and a national controversy was born. From the middle to the late 1990s, other interested parties from all over — the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the medical journals, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and especially the extremely active advocacy group CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder) — further stoked the debate through countless reports, conferences, pamphlets, and exchanges on the Internet.

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To this outpouring of information and opinion two new books, both on the critical side of the ledger, have just been added: Richard DeGrandpre's iconoclastic *Ritalin Nation: Rapid-Fire Culture and the Transformation of Human Consciousness* (Simon and Schuster, 1999), and physician Lawrence H. Diller's superbly analytical *Running on Ritalin: A Physician Reflects on Children, Society and Performance in a Pill* (Bantam Books, 1998). Their appearance marks an unusually opportune moment in which to sift through some ten years' worth of information on Ritalin and ADD and to ask what, if anything, we have learned from the national experiment that has made both terms into household words.

Let's put the question bluntly: How has it come to pass that in *fin-de-siècle* America, where every child from preschool onward can recite the "anti-drug" catechism by heart, millions of middle- and upper-middle class children are being legally drugged with a substance so similar to cocaine that, as one journalist accurately summarized the science, "it takes a chemist to tell the difference"?

What is methylphenidate?

THE FIRST THING THAT has made the Ritalin explosion possible is that methylphenidate, to use the generic term, is perhaps the most widely misunderstood drug in America today. Despite the fact that it is, as Lawrence Diller observes in *Running on Ritalin*, "the most intensively studied drug in pediatrics," most laymen remain under a misimpression both about the nature of the drug itself and about its pharmacological effects on children.

What most people believe about this drug is the same erroneous characterization that appeared elsewhere in the *Times* piece quoted earlier — that it is "a mild stimulant of the central nervous system that, for reasons not fully understood, often helps children who are chronically distractible, impulsive and hyperactive settle down and concentrate." The word "stimulant" here is at least medically accurate. "Mild," a more ambiguous judgment, depends partly on the dosage, and partly on whether the reader can imagine describing as "mild" *any* dosage of the drugs to which methylphenidate is closely related. These include dextroamphetamine (street name: "dexies"), methamphetamine (street name: "crystal meth"), and, of course, cocaine. But the chief substance of the *Times*' formulation here — that the reasons *why* Ritalin does what it does to children remain a medical mystery — is, as informed writers from all over the debate have long acknowledged, an enduring public myth.

"Methylphenidate," in the words of a 1995 DEA background paper on the drug, "is a central nervous system (CNS) stimulant and shares many of the pharmacological effects of amphetamine, methamphetamine, and cocaine." Further, it "produces behavioral, psychological, subjective, and

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reinforcing effects similar to those of d-amphetamine including increases in rating of euphoria, drug liking and activity, and decreases in sedation." For comparative purposes, that same DEA report includes a table listing the potential adverse physiological effects of both methylphenidate and dextroamphetamine; they are, as the table shows, nearly identical (see below). To put the point conversely, as Richard DeGrandpre does in *Ritalin Nation* by quoting a 1995 report in the *Archives of General Psychiatry*, "Cocaine, which is one of the most reinforcing and addicting of the abused drugs, has pharmacological actions that are very similar to those of methylphenidate, which is now the most commonly prescribed psychotropic medicine for children in the U.S."

Such pharmacological similarities have been explored over the years in numerous studies. DeGrandpre reports that "lab animals given the choice to self-administer comparative doses of cocaine and Ritalin do not favor one

Crystal Lite? Potential Adverse Effects of Ritalin and Dexies

Organic system affected	*Methylphenidate*	*Dextroamphetamine*
Cardiovascular	Palpitation Tachycardia Increased blood pressure	Palpitation Tachycardia Increased blood pressure
Central Nervous System	Excessive CNS stimulation Psychosis Dizziness Headache Insomnia Nervousness Irritability Attacks of Gilles de la Tourette or other tic syndromes	Excessive CNS stimulation Psychosis Dizziness Headache Insomnia Nervousness Irritability Attacks of Gilles de la Tourette or other tic syndromes
Gastrointestinal	Anorexia Nausea Vomiting Stomach pain Dry mouth	Anorexia Nausea Vomiting Stomach pain Dry mouth
Endocrine/metabolic	Weight loss Growth suppression	Weight loss Growth suppression
Other	Leukopenia Hypersensitivity reaction Anemia Blurred vision	Skin rash or hives Blurred vision

Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration

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over another" and that "a similar study showed monkeys would work in the same fashion for Ritalin as they would for cocaine." The DEA reports another finding — that methylphenidate is actually "chosen *over* cocaine in preference studies" of non-human primates (emphasis added). In *Driven to Distraction*, pro-Ritalin psychiatrists Hallowell and Ratey underline the interchangeable nature of methylphenidate and cocaine when they observe that "people with ADD feel focused when they take cocaine, *just as they do when they take Ritalin* [emphasis added]." Moreover, methylphenidate (like other stimulants) appears to increase tolerance for related drugs. Recent evidence indicates, for example, that when people accustomed to prescribed Ritalin turn to cocaine, they seek higher doses of it than do others. To summarize, again from the DEA report, "it is clear that methylphenidate substitutes for cocaine and d-amphetamine in a number of behavioral paradigms."

Ritalin 'works' on children the way related stimulants work on adults.

All of which is to say that Ritalin "works" on children in the same way that related stimulants work on adults — sharpening the short-term attention span when the drug kicks in and producing equally predictable valleys ("coming down," in the old street parlance; "rebounding," in Ritalinese) when the effect wears off. Just as predictably, children are subject to the same adverse effects as adults imbibing such drugs, with the two most common — appetite suppression and insomnia — being of particular concern. That is why, for example, handbooks on ADD will counsel parents to see their doctor if they feel their child is losing too much weight, and why some children who take methylphenidate are also prescribed sedatives to help them sleep. It is also why one of the more Orwellian phrases in the psychotropic universe, "drug holidays" — meaning scheduled times, typically on weekends or school vacations, when the dosage of methylphenidate is lowered or the drug temporarily withdrawn in order to keep its adverse effects in check — is now so common in the literature that it no longer even appears in quotations.

Just as, contrary to folklore, the adult and child physiologies respond in the same way to such drugs, so too do the physiologies of *all* people, regardless of whether they are diagnosed with ADD or hyperactivity. As Diller puts it, in a point echoed by many other sources, methylphenidate "potentially improves the performance of anyone — child or not, ADD-diagnosed or not." Writing in the *Public Interest* last year, psychologist Ken Livingston provided a similar summary of the research, citing "studies conducted during the mid seventies to early eighties by Judith Rapaport of the National Institute of Mental Health" which "clearly showed that stimulant drugs improve the performance of most people, regardless of whether they have a diagnosis of ADHD, on tasks requiring good attention." ("Indeed," he com-

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ments further in an obvious comparison, "this probably explains the high levels of 'self-medicating' around the world" in the form of "stimulants like caffeine and nicotine.")

A third myth about methylphenidate is that it, alone among drugs of its kind, is immune to being abused. To the contrary: Abuse statistics have flourished alongside the boom in Ritalin prescription-writing. Though it is quite true that elementary schoolchildren are unlikely to ingest extra doses of the drug, which is presumably kept away from little hands, a very different pattern has emerged among teenagers and adults who have the manual dexterity to open prescription bottles and the wherewithal to chop up and snort their contents (a method that puts the drug into the bloodstream far faster than oral ingestion). For this group, statistics on the proliferating abuse of methylphenidate in schoolyards and on the street are dramatic.

According to the DEA, for example, as early as 1994 Ritalin was the fastest-growing amphetamine being used "non-medically" by high school seniors in Texas. In 1991, reports DeGrandpre in *Ritalin Nation*, "children between the ages of 10 and 14 years old were involved in only about 25 emergency room visits connected with Ritalin abuse. In 1995, just four years later, that number had climbed to more than 400 visits, which for this group was about the same number of visits as for cocaine." Not surprisingly, given these and other measures of methylphenidate's recreational appeal, criminal entrepreneurs have responded with interest to the drug's increased circulation. From 1990 to 1995, the DEA reports, there were about 2,000 thefts of methylphenidate, most of them night break-ins at pharmacies — meaning that the drug "ranks in the top 10 most frequently reported pharmaceutical drugs diverted from licensed handlers."

Because so many teenagers and college students have access to it, methylphenidate is particularly likely to be abused on school grounds. "The prescription drug Ritalin," reported *Newsweek* in 1995, "is now a popular high on campus — with some serious side effects." DeGrandpre notes that at his own college in Vermont, Ritalin was cited as the third-favorite drug to snort in a campus survey. He also runs, without comment, scores of individual abuse stories from newspapers across the country over several pages of his book. In *Running on Ritalin,* Diller cites several undercover narcotics agents who confirm that "Ritalin is cheaper and easier to purchase at playgrounds than on the street." He further reports one particularly hazardous fact about Ritalin abuse, namely that teenagers, especially, do not consider the drug to be anywhere near as dangerous as heroin or cocaine. To the contrary: "they think that since their younger brother takes it under a doctor's prescription, it must be safe."

In short, methylphenidate looks like an amphetamine, acts like an amphetamine, and is abused like an amphetamine. Perhaps not surprisingly, those who value its medicinal effects tend to explain the drug differently. To some, Ritalin is to children what Prozac and other psychotropic "mood

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brightening" drugs are to adults — a short-term fix for enhancing personality and performance. But the analogy is misleading. Prozac and its sisters are not stimulants with stimulant side effects; there is, ipso facto, no black market for drugs like these. Even more peculiar is the analogy favored by the advocates in CHADD: that "Just as a pair of glasses help the nearsighted person focus," as Hallowell and Ratey explain, "so can medication help the person with ADD see the world more clearly." But there is no black market for eyeglasses, either — nor loss of appetite, insomnia, "dysphoria" (an unexplained feeling of sadness that sometimes accompanies pediatric Ritalin-taking), nor even the faintest risk of toxic psychosis, to cite one of Ritalin's rare but dramatically chilling possible effects.

What is methylphenidate "really" like? Thomas Armstrong, writing in *The Myth of the ADD Child* four years ago, probably summarized the drug's appeal best. "Many middle and upper-middle class parents," he observed then, "see Ritalin and related drugs almost as 'cognitive steroids' that can be used to help their kids focus on their schoolwork better than the next kid." Put this way, the attraction to Ritalin makes considerable sense. In some ways, one can argue, that after-lunch hit of low-dose methylphenidate is much like the big cup from Starbucks that millions of adults swig to get them through the day — but only in some ways. There is no dramatic upswing in hospital emergency room visits and pharmacy break-ins due to caffeine abuse; the brain being jolted awake in one case is that of an adult, and in the other that of a developing child; and, of course, the substance doing the jolting on all those children is not legally available and ubiquitous caffeine, but a substance that the DEA insists on calling a Schedule II drug, meaning that it is subject to the same controls, and for the same reasons of abuse potential, as related stimulants and other powerful drugs like morphine.

What is CHADD?

THIS MENTION OF SCHEDULE II drugs brings us to a second reason for the Ritalin explosion in this decade. That is the extraordinary political and medical clout of CHADD, by far the largest of the ADD support groups and a lobbying organization of demonstrated prowess. Founded in 1987, CHADD had, according to Diller, grown by 1993 to include 35,000 families and 600 chapters nationally. Its professional advisory board, he notes, "includes most of the most prominent academicians in the ADD world, a veritable who's who in research."

Like most support groups in self-help America, CHADD functions partly as clearing-house and information center for its burgeoning membership — organizing speaking events, issuing a monthly newsletter (*Chadderbox*), putting out a glossy magazine (named, naturally enough, *Attention!*), and operating an exceedingly active website stocked with on-line fact sheets and items for sale. Particular scrutiny is given to every legal and political devel-

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opment offering new benefits for those diagnosed with ADD. On these and other fronts of interest, CHADD leads the ADD world. "No matter how many sources of information are out there," as a slogan on its website promises, "CHADD is the one you can trust."

One of CHADD's particular strengths is that it is exquisitely media-sensitive, and has a track record of delivering speedy responses to any reports on Ritalin or ADD that the group deems inaccurate. Diller quotes as representative one fundraising letter from 1997, where the organization listed its chief goals and objectives as "conduct[ing] a proactive media campaign" and "challeng[ing] negative, inaccurate reports that demean or undermine people with ADD." Citing "savage attacks" in the *Wall Street Journal* and *Forbes*, the letter also went on to exhort readers into "fighting these battles of misinformation, innuendo, ignorance and outright hostility toward CHADD and adults who have a neurobiological disorder." The circle-the-wagons rhetoric here appears to be typical of the group, as is the zeal.

The circle-the-wagons rhetoric here appears to be typical of the group, as is the zeal.

Certainly it was with missionary fervor that CHADD, in 1995, mounted an extraordinary campaign to make Ritalin easier to obtain. Methylphenidate, as mentioned, is a Schedule II drug. That means, among other things, that the DEA must approve an annual production quota for the substance — a fact that irritates those who rely on it, since it raises the specter, if only in theory, of a Ritalin "shortage." It also means that some states require that prescriptions for Ritalin be written in triplicate for the purpose of monitoring its use, and that refills cannot simply be called into the pharmacy as they can for Schedule III drugs (for example, low-dosage opiates like Tylenol with codeine, and various compounds used to treat migraine). Doctors, particularly those who prescribe Ritalin in quantity, are inconvenienced by this requirement. So too are many parents, who dislike having to stop by the doctor's office every time the Ritalin runs out. Moreover, many parents and doctors alike object to methylphenidate's Schedule II classification in principle, on the grounds that it makes children feel stigmatized; the authors of *Driven to Distraction*, for example, claim that one of the most common problems in treating ADD is that "some pharmacists, in their attempt to comply with federal regulations, make consumers [of Ritalin] feel as though they are obtaining illicit drugs."

For all of these reasons, CHADD petitioned the DEA to reclassify Ritalin as a Schedule III drug. This petition was co-signed by the American Academy of Neurology, and it was also supported by other distinguished medical bodies, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Psychological Association, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. Diller's account of this episode in *Running on Ritalin* is particularly credible, for he is a doctor who has himself written many prescriptions for Ritalin in

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cases where he has judged it to be indicated. Nevertheless, he found himself dissenting strongly from the effort to decontrol it — an effort that, as he writes, was "unprecedented in the history of Schedule II substances" and "could have had a profound impact on the availability of the drug."

What happened next, while CHADD awaited the DEA's verdict, was in Diller's words "a bombshell." For before the DEA had officially responded, a television documentary revealed that Ciba-Geigy (now called Novartis), the pharmaceuticals giant that manufactures Ritalin, had contributed nearly $900,000 to CHADD over five years, and that CHADD had failed to disclose the contributions to all but a few selected members.

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The response from the DEA, which appeared in the background report cited earlier, was harsh and uncompromising. Backed by scores of footnotes and well over a 100 sources in the medical literature, this report amounted to a public excoriation of CHADD's efforts and a meticulous description, alarming for those who have read it, of the realities of Ritalin use and abuse. "Most of the ADHD literature prepared for public consumption and available to parents," the DEA charged, "does not address the abuse liability or actual abuse of methylphenidate. Instead, methylphenidate is routinely portrayed as a benign, mild stimulant that is not associated with abuse or serious effects. In reality, however, there is an abundance of scientific literature which indicates that methylphenidate shares the same abuse potential as other Schedule II stimulants."

The DEA went on to note its "concerns" over "the depth of the financial relationship between CHADD and Ciba-Geigy." Ciba-Geigy, the DEA observed, "stands to benefit from a change in scheduling of methylphenidate." It further observed that the United Nations International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) had "expressed concern about non-governmental organizations and parental associations in the United States that are actively lobbying for the medical use of methylphenidate for children with ADD." (The rest of the world, it should be noted, has yet to acquire the American taste for Ritalin. Sweden, for example, had methylphenidate withdrawn from the market in 1968 following a spate of abuse cases. Today, 90 percent of Ritalin production is consumed in the United States.) The report concluded with the documented observations that "abuse data indicate a growing problem among school-age children," that "ADHD adults have a high incidence of substance disorders," and that "with three to five percent of today's youth being administered methylphenidate on a chronic basis, these issues are of great concern."

Yet whatever public embarrassment CHADD and its supporters may have suffered on account of this setback turned out to be short-lived. Though it

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failed in the attempt to decontrol Ritalin (in the end, the group withdrew its petition), on other legislative fronts CHADD was garnering one victory after another. By the end of the 1990s, thanks largely to CHADD and its allies, an ADD diagnosis could lead to an impressive array of educational, financial, and social service benefits.

In elementary and high school classrooms, a turning point came in 1991 with a letter from the U.S. Department of Education to state school superintendents outlining "three ways in which children labeled ADD could qualify for special education services in public school under existing laws," as Diller puts it. This directive was based on the landmark 1990 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which "mandates that eligible children receive access to special education and/or related services, and that this education be designed to meet each child's unique educational needs" through an individualized program. As a result, ADD-diagnosed children are now entitled by law to a long list of services, including separate special-education classrooms, learning specialists, special equipment, tailored homework assignments, and more. The IDEA also means that public school districts unable to accommodate such children may be forced to pick up the tab for private education.

IN THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION, where the first wave of Ritalin-taking students has recently landed, an ADD diagnosis can be parlayed into other sorts of special treatment. Diller reports that ADD-based requests for extra time on SATs, LSATs, and MCATs have risen sharply in the course of the 1990s. Yet the example of such high-profile tests is only one particularly measurable way of assessing ADD's impact on education; in many classrooms, including college classrooms, similar "accommodations" are made informally at a student's demand. A professor in the Ivy League tells me that students with an ADD diagnosis now come to him "waving doctor's letters and pills" and requesting extra time for routine assignments. To refuse "accommodation" is to risk a hornet's nest of liabilities, as a growing caseload shows. A 1996 article in *Forbes* cites the example of Whittier Law School, which was sued by an ADD-diagnosed student for giving only 20 extra minutes per hourlong exam instead of a full hour. The school, fearing an expensive legal battle, settled the suit. It further undertook a preventive measure: banning pop quizzes "because ADD students need separate rooms and extra time."

Concessions have also been won by advocates in the area of college athletics. The National College Athletic Association (NCAA) once prohibited Ritalin usage (as do the U.S. and International Olympic Committees today) because of what Diller calls its "possible acute performance-enhancing benefits." In 1993, citing legal jeopardy as a reason for changing course, the NCAA capitulated. Today a letter from the team physician will suffice to allow an athlete to ingest Ritalin, even though that same athlete would be disqualified from participating in the Olympics if he were to test positive for stimulants.

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Nor are children and college students the only ones to claim benefits in the name of ADD. With adults now accounting for the fastest-growing subset of ADD diagnoses, services and accommodations are also proliferating in the workplace. The enabling regulations here are 1997 guidelines from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) which linked traits like chronic lateness, poor judgment, and hostility to coworkers — in other words, the sorts of traits people get fired for — to "psychiatric impairments," meaning traits that are protected under the law. As one management analyst for the *Wall Street Journal* recently observed (and as CHADD regularly reminds its readers), these EEOC guidelines have already generated a list of accommodations for ADD-diagnosed employees, including special office furniture, special equipment such as tape recorders and laptops, and byzantine organizational schemes (color coding, buddy systems, alarm clocks, and other "reminders") designed to keep such employees on track. "Employers," this writer warned, "could find themselves facing civil suits and forced to restore the discharged people to their old positions, or even give them promotions as well as back pay or reasonable accommodation."

An ADD diagnosis can also be helpful in acquiring Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. SSI takes income into account in providing benefits to the ADD diagnosed; in that, it is an exception to the trend. Most of the benefits now available, as even this brief review indicates, have come to be provided in principle, on account of the diagnosis per se. Seen this way, and taking the class composition of the ADD-diagnosed into account, it is no wonder that more and more people, as Diller and many other doctors report, are now marching into medical offices demanding a letter, a diagnosis, and a prescription. The pharmacological charms of Ritalin quite apart, ADD can operate, in effect, as affirmative action for affluent white people.

What is Attention Deficit Disorder?

ANOTHER FACTOR THAT has put Ritalin into millions of medicine cabinets has to do with the protean nature of the disorder for which it is prescribed — a disorder that was officially so designated by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980, and one that, to cite Thomas Armstrong, "has gone through at least 25 different name changes in the past century."

Despite the successful efforts to have ADD construed as a disability like blindness, the question of what ADD *is* remains passionately disputed. To CHADD, of course, it is a "neurobiological disorder," and not only to CHADD; "the belief that ADD is a neurological disease," as Diller writes, also "prevails today among medical researchers and university teaching faculty" and "is reflected in the leading journals of psychiatry." What the critics observe is something else — that "despite highly successful efforts to define ADD as a well-established disorder of the brain," as DeGrandpre puts it in a

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formulation echoed by many, "three decades of medical science have yet to produce any substantive evidence to support such a claim."

Nonetheless, the effort to produce such evidence has been prodigious. Research on the neurological side of ADD has come to resemble a Holy Grail-like quest for something, anything, that can be said to set the ADD brain apart — genes, imbalances of brain chemicals like dopamine and serotonin, neurological damage, lead poisoning, thyroid problems, and more. The most famous of these studies, and the chief grounds on which ADD has come to be categorized as a neurobiological disability, was reported in *The New England Journal of Medicine* in 1990 by Alan Zametkin and colleagues at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). These researchers used then-new positron emission tomography (PET) scanning to measure differences in glucose metabolizing between hyperactive adults and a control group. According to the study's results, what emerged was a statistically significant difference in the rates of glucose metabolism — a difference hailed by many observers as the first medical "proof" of a biological basis for ADD.

Research on the neurological side has come to resemble a Holy Grail-like quest.

Diller and DeGrandpre are only the latest to argue, at length, that the Zametkin study established no such thing. For starters — and from the scientific point of view, most important — a series of follow-up studies, as Diller documents, "failed to confirm" the original result. DeGrandpre, for his part, details the methodological problems with the study itself — that the participants were adults rather than children, meaning that the implications for the majority of the Ritalin-taking population were unclear at best; that there was "no evidence" that the reported difference in metabolism bore any relationship to behavioral activity; that the study was further plagued by "a confounding variable that had nothing to do with ADD," namely that the control group included far fewer male subjects than the ADD group; and that, even if there had been a valid difference in metabolism between the two groups, "this study tells us nothing about the cause of these differences."

Numerous other attempts to locate the missing link between ADD and brain activity are likewise dissected by Diller and DeGrandpre in their books. So too is the causal fallacy prevalent in ADD literature — that if a child responds positively to Ritalin, that response "proves" that he has an underlying biological disorder. This piece of illogic is easily dismissed. As these and other authors emphasize, drugs like Ritalin have the same effect on just about everybody. Give it to almost any child, and the child will become more focused and less aggressive — one might say, easier to manage — whether or not there were "symptoms" of ADD in the first place.

In sum, and as Thomas Armstrong noted four years ago in *The Myth of*

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the ADD *Child*, ADD remains an elusive disorder that "cannot be authoritatively identified in the same way as polio, heart disease, or other legitimate illnesses." Instead, doctors depend on a series of tests designed to measure the panoply of ADD symptoms. To cite Armstrong again: "there is no prime mover in this chain of tests; no First Test for ADD that has been declared self-referential and infallible." Some researchers, for example, use "continuous performance tasks" (CPTs) that require the person being tested to pay attention throughout a series of repetitive actions. A popular CPT is the Gordon Diagnostic System, a box that flashes numbers, whose lever is supposed to be pressed every time a particular combination appears. Yet as numerous critics have suggested, although the score that results is supposed to tell us about a given child's ability to attend, its actual significance is rather ambiguous; perhaps, as Armstrong analyzes, "it only tells how a child will perform when attending to a repetitive series of meaningless numbers on a soulless task."

As one pediatrician put it succinctly, 'The diagnosis is a mess.'

In the absence of any positive medical or scientific test, the diagnosis of ADD in both children and adults depends, today as a decade ago, almost exclusively on behavioral criteria. The diagnostic criteria for children, according to the latest *Diagnostic and Statistics Manual* (DSM-IV), include six or more months' worth of some 14 activities such as fidgeting, squirming, distraction by extraneous stimuli, difficulty waiting turns, blurting out answers, losing things, interrupting, ignoring adults, and so on. (To read the list is to understand why boys are diagnosed with ADD three to five times as often as girls.) The diagnostic latitude offered by this list is obvious; as Diller understates the point, "what often strikes those encountering DSM criteria for the first time is how common these symptoms are among children" generally.

The DSM criteria for adults are if anything even more expansive, and include such ambiguous phenomena as a sense of underachievement, difficulty getting organized, chronic procrastination, a search for high stimulation, impatience, impulsivity, and mood swings. Hallowell and Ratey's 100-question test for ADD in *Driven to Distraction*, an elaborately extrapolated version of the DSM checklist, illustrates this profound elasticity. Their questions range from the straightforward ("Are you impulsive?" "Are you easily distracted?" "Do you fidget a lot?") to more elusive ways of eliciting the disorder ("Do you change the radio station in your car frequently?" "Are you always on the go, even when you don't really want to be?" "Do you have a hard time reading a book all the way through?"). Throughout, the distinction between what is pathological and what is not remains unclear — because, in the authors' words, "There is no clear line of demarcation between ADD and normal behavior."

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Thus the business of diagnosing ADD remains, as Diller puts it, "very much in the eye of the beholder." In 1998, partly for that reason, the National Institutes of Health convened a conference on ADD with hundreds of participants and a panel of 13 doctors and educators. This conference, as newspapers reported at the time, broke no new ground, and indeed could not reach agreement on several important points — for instance, how long children should take drugs for ADD, or whether and when drug treatment might become risky. Even more interesting, conference members could not agree on what is arguably the rather fundamental question of how to diagnose the disorder in the first place. As one panelist, a pediatrician, put it succinctly, "The diagnosis is a mess."

Who has ADD?

TO TEST THIS HYPOTHESIS, I gave copies of Hallowell and Ratey's questionnaire to 20 people (let's call them subjects) and asked them to complete it and total up the number of times they checked "yes." The full questionnaire appears at the conclusion of this piece so that interested readers can take it themselves. "These questions," as Hallowell and Ratey note, "reflect those an experienced diagnostician would ask." Although, as they observe, "this quiz cannot confirm the diagnosis" (as we have seen already, nothing can), it does "offer a rough assessment as to whether professional help should be sought." In short, "the more questions that are answered 'yes,' the more likely it is that ADD may be present."

In a stab at methodological soundness, I had equal numbers of males and females take the test. All would be dubbed middle- or upper-middle class, all but one are or have been professionals of one sort or another, all are white, and the group was politically diverse — which is to say, the sample accurately reflects the socioeconomic pool from which most of the current Ritalin-taking population is drawn. As to the matter of observer interference, although some subjects may have guessed what the questionnaire was looking for, all of them (myself excepted, of course) took the test "blind," that is, without any accompanying material to prejudice their responses.

We begin with results at the lower end of the scale. Of the 18 subjects who completed the test, two delivered "yes" scores of 8 and 10 (a professor of English and his wife, an at-home mother active in philanthropy). These "yes" results, as it turned out, were at least threefold lower than anyone else's. In "real" social science, according to some expert sources, we would simply call these low scores "outliers" and throw them out for the same reason. We, however, shall include them, if only on the amateur grounds of scrupulousness.

The next lowest "yes" tallies — 29 in each case — were achieved by an editorial assistant and a school nurse. That is to say, even these "low scorers" managed to answer yes *almost a third of the time* (remember, "the more

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questions that are answered 'yes,' the more likely it is that ADD may be present"). After them, we find a single "yes" score of 33 (an assistant editor). Following that, fully six subjects, or a third of the test-finishers, produced scores in the 40s. These include this magazine's editor, two at-home mothers (one a graphic designer, the other a poet), a writer for *Time* and other distinguished publications, *Policy Review*'s business manager, and — scoring an estimable 49 — the headmaster of a private school in Washington.

The drug makes children do what their parents and teachers cannot get them to do without it: Sit down, shut up, keep still, pay attention.

Proceeding into the upper echelons, a novelist who is also an at-home mother reported her score as 55, and a renowned demographic expert with ties to Harvard and Washington think tanks scored a 57. A male British journalist and at-home father achieved a 60, and a female American journalist and at-home mother (me) got a 62. Still another at-home mother, this one with a former career in public relations, garnered a 65.

In the lead, at least of the test-finishers, was a bestselling satirist whom we shall call, for purposes of anonymity, Patrick O'Rourke; he produced an estimable score of 75. "Mr. O'Rourke" further advanced the cause of science by answering the questions on behalf of his 16-month-old daughter; according to his proud report, 65 was the result. Then there were the two subjects who, for whatever reason, were unable to complete the test in the first place. One of these subjects called to say that he'd failed to finish the test because he'd "gotten bored checking off so many yes answers." When I pressed him for some, any, final tally for me to include, he got irritated and refused, saying he was "too lazy" to count them up. Finally he said "50 would be about right," take it or leave it. He is a Wall Street investment banker specializing in the creation of derivative securities. Our last subject, perhaps the most pathological of all, failed to deliver any score despite repeated reminding phone calls from the research team. He is the professor mentioned earlier, the one who reported that ADD is now being used as a blanket for procrastination and shirking on campus.

Now on to interpreting the results. Apart from the exceedingly anomalous two scores of ten and under, all the rest of the subjects reported answering "yes" to at least a quarter of the questions — surely enough to trigger the possibility of an ADD diagnosis, at least in those medical offices Diller dubs "Ritalin mills." (As for the one subject who reported no result whatsoever, he is obviously entitled to untold ADD bonus points for that reason alone.) Fully 15 of the finishers, or 80-plus percent, answered yes to one-third of the questions or more. Eight of the finishers, or 40-plus percent of

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the sample, answered yes more than half of the time, with a number of scores in the high 40s right behind them. In other words, *roughly half of the sample answered yes roughly half of the time.*

My favorite comment on the exercise came from the school nurse (who scored, one recalls, a *relatively* low 29). She has a background in psychiatry, and therefore realized what kind of diagnosis the questionnaire was designed to elicit. When she called to report her result, she said that taking the test had made her think hard about the whole ADD issue. "My goodness," she concluded, "it looks like the kind of thing almost anybody could have." This brings us to the fourth reason for the explosion of ADD and its prescribed corollary, Ritalin: The nurse is right.

What is childhood?

THE FOURTH AND MOST obvious reason millions of Americans, most of them children, are now taking Ritalin can be summarized in a single word that crops up everywhere in the dry-bones literature on ADD and its drug of choice: *compliance*. One day at a time, the drug continues to make children do what their parents and teachers either will not or cannot get them to do without it: Sit down, shut up, keep still, pay attention. That some children are born with or develop behavioral problems so severe that drugs like Ritalin are a godsend is true and sad. It is also irrelevant to the explosion in psychostimulant prescriptions. For most, the drug is serving a more nuanced purpose — that of "help[ing] your child to be more agreeable and less argumentative," as Barbara Ingersoll put it over a decade ago in *Your Hyperactive Child.*

There are, as was mentioned, millions of stories in the Ritalin universe, and the literature of advocates and critics alike all illustrates this point. There is no denying that millions of people benefit from having children take Ritalin — the many, many parents who will attest that the drug has improved their child's school performance, their home lives, often even their own marriages; the teachers who have been relieved by its effects in their classrooms, and have gone on to proselytize other parents of other unruly children (frequently, it is teachers who first suggest that a child be checked for the disorder); and the doctors who, when faced with all these grateful parents and teachers, find, as Diller finds, that "at times the pressure for me to medicate a child is intense."

Some other stories seep through the literature too, but only if one goes looking for them. These are the stories standing behind the clinical accounts of teenagers who lie and say they've taken the day's dose when they haven't, or of the children who cry in doctor's offices and "cheek" the pill (hide it rather than swallow, another linguistic innovation of Ritalinese) at home. These are the stories standing behind such statements as the following, culled from case studies throughout the literature: "It takes over of me [sic];

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it takes control." "It numbed me." "Taking it meant I was dumb." "I feel rotten about taking pills; why me?" "It makes me feel like a baby." And, perhaps most evocative of all, "I don't know how to explain. I just don't want to take it any more."

But these quotes, as any reader will recognize, appeal only to sentiment; science, for its part, has long since declared its loyalties. In the end, what has made the Ritalin outbreak not only possible but inevitable is the ongoing blessing of the American medical establishment — and not only that establishment. In a particularly enthusiastic account of the drug in a recent issue of the *New Yorker*, writer Malcolm Gladwell exults in the idea that "we are now extending to the young cognitive aids of a kind that used to be reserved exclusively for the old." He further suggests that, given expert estimates of the prevalence of ADD (up to 10 percent of the population, depending on the expert), if anything "too few" children are taking the drug. Surely all these experts have a point. Surely this country can do more, much more, to reduce fidgeting, squirming, talking excessively, interrupting, losing things, ignoring adults, and all those other pathologies of what used to be called childhood.

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ATTENTION, GROWN-UPS: DO YOU HAVE ADD?

Editor's Note: The following is from Edward M. Hallowell and John J. Ratey's Driven to Distraction: Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder from Childhood through Adulthood.

The following set of questions reflects those an experienced diagnostician will ask. While this quiz cannot confirm the diagnosis, the questions can increase the reader's feel for what ADD is, and offer a rough assessment as to whether professional help should be sought to make the actual diagnosis of ADD.

The more questions that are answered "yes," the more likely it is that ADD may be present. Since everybody will answer "yes" to some number of questions, and since we have not established norms for this questionnaire, it should only be used as an informal gauge.

1. Are you left-handed or ambidextrous?
2. Do you have a family history of drug or alcohol abuse, depression, or manic-depressive illness?
3. Are you moody?
4. Were you considered an underachiever in school? Now?
5. Do you have trouble getting started on things?
6. Do you drum your fingers a lot, tap your feet, fidget, or pace?
7. When you read, do you find that you often have to reread a paragraph or an entire page because you are daydreaming?
8. Do you tune out or space out a lot?
9. Do you have a hard time relaxing?
10. Are you excessively impatient?
11. Do you find that you undertake many projects simultaneously so your life often resembles a juggler who's got six more balls in the air than he can handle?
12. Are you impulsive?
13. Are you easily distracted?
14. Even if you are easily distracted, do you find that there are times when your power of concentration is laser-beam intense?
15. Do you procrastinate chronically?
16. Do you often get excited by projects and then not follow through?
17. More than most people, do you feel it is hard to make yourself understood?
18. Is your memory so porous that if you go from one room to the next to get something, by the time you get to the next room you've sometimes forgotten what you were looking for?

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19. Do you smoke cigarettes?
20. Do you drink too much?
21. If you have ever tried cocaine, did you find that it helped you focus and calmed you down, rather than making you high?
22. Do you change the radio station in your car frequently?
23. Do you wear out your TV remote-control switch by changing stations frequently?
24. Do you feel driven, as if an engine inside you won't slow down?
25. As a kid, were you called words like, "a daydreamer," "lazy," "a spaceshot," "impulsive," "disruptive," "lazy," or just plain "bad"?
26. In intimate relationships is your inability to linger over conversations an impediment?
27. Are you always on the go, even when you don't really want to be?
28. More than most people, do you hate waiting in line?
29. Are you constitutionally incapable of reading directions first?
30. Do you have a hair-trigger temper?
31. Are you constantly having to sit on yourself to keep from blurting out the wrong thing?
32. Do you like to gamble?
33. Do you feel like exploding inside when someone has trouble getting to the point?
34. Were you hyperactive as a child?
35. Are you drawn to situations of high intensity?
36. Do you often try to do the hard things rather than what comes easily to you?
37. Are you particularly intuitive?
38. Do you often find yourself involved in a situation without having planned it at all?
39. Would you rather have your teeth drilled by a dentist than make or follow a list?
40. Do you chronically resolve to organize your life better only to find that you're always on the brink of chaos?
41. Do you often find that you have an itch you cannot scratch, an appetite for something "more" and you're not sure what it is?
42. Would you describe yourself as hypersexual?
43. One man who turned out to have adult ADD presented with this unusual triad of symptoms: cocaine abuse, frequent reading of pornography, and an addiction to crossword puzzles. Can you understand him, even if you do not have those symptoms?
44. Would you consider yourself an addictive personality?
45. Are you more flirtatious than you really mean to be?
46. Did you grow up in a chaotic, boundariless family?

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47. Do you find it hard to be alone?
48. Do you often counter depressive moods by some sort of potentially harmful compulsive behavior such as overworking, overspending, overdrinking, or overeating?
49. Do you have dyslexia?
50. Do you have a family history of ADD or hyperactivity?
51. Do you have a really hard time tolerating frustration?
52. Are you restless without "action" in your life?
53. Do you have a hard time reading a book all the way through?
54. Do you regularly break rules or minor laws rather than put up with the frustration of obeying them?
55. Are you beset by irrational worries?
56. Do you frequently make letter or number reversals?
57. Have you been the driver and at fault in more than four car accidents?
58. Do you handle money erratically?
59. Are you a gung-ho, go-for-it sort of person?
60. Do you find structure and routine are both rare in your life and soothing when you find them?
61. Have you been divorced more than once?
62. Do you struggle to maintain self-esteem?
63. Do you have poor hand-eye coordination?
64. As a kid, were you a bit of a klutz at sports?
65. Have you changed jobs a lot?
66. Are you a maverick?
67. Are memos virtually impossible for you to read or write?
68. Do you find it almost impossible to keep an updated address book, phone book, or Rolodex?
69. Are you the life of the party one day and hang-dog the next?
70. Given an unexpected chunk of free time, do you often find that you don't use it well, or get depressed during it?
71. Are you more creative or imaginative than most people?
72. Is paying attention or staying tuned in a chronic problem for you?
73. Do you work best in short spurts?
74. Do you let the bank balance your checkbook?
75. Are you usually eager to try something new?
76. Do you find you often get depressed after a success?
77. Do you hunger after myths and other organizing stories?
78. Do you feel you fail to live up to your potential?
79. Are you particularly restless?
80. Were you a daydreamer in class?
81. Were you ever the class clown?

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82. Have you ever been described as "needy" or even "insatiable"?
83. Do you have trouble accurately assessing the impact you have on others?
84. Do you tend to approach problems intuitively?
85. When you get lost, do you tend to "feel" your way along rather than refer to a map?
86. Do you often get distracted during sex, even though you like it?
87. Were you adopted?
88. Do you have many allergies?
89. Did you have frequent ear infections as a child?
90. Are you much more effective when you are your own boss?
91. Are you smarter than you've been able to demonstrate?
92. Are you particularly insecure?
93. Do you have trouble keeping secrets?
94. Do you often forget what you're going to say just as you are about to say it?
95. Do you love to travel?
96. Are you claustrophobic?
97. Have you ever wondered if you're crazy?
98. Do you get the gist of things very quickly?
99. Do you laugh a lot?
100. Did you have trouble paying attention long enough to read this entire questionnaire?

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The Conservative Case for NATO

By Bruce Pitcairn Jackson

On April 23, 1999, the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Washington Treaty, the heads of state of the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization will gather in Washington to celebrate the creation of the Atlantic Alliance. Undoubtedly, these leaders will commend themselves for having built the most successful military alliance in history. They will look back with satisfaction on NATO's central role in the containment and defeat of Soviet imperialism and its crucial contribution to the defense, reformation and ultimate reunification of Germany. They can point to NATO's unique role in keeping the peace between Greece and Turkey over decades, in establishing the Partnership for Peace program, and in the "Open Door" for new democracies. They might also observe that NATO has served to help stave off American flirtations with isolationism and has acted as a magnet that continues to pull emerging democracies toward the West. Finally, there will be justifiable celebration of the accession of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary as NATO allies, a watershed event that can only be regarded as a major step towards the achievement of the West's historic objective of a Europe whole and free.

Ironically, however, while the allies will have no difficulty finding past achievements to toast, they will doubtless find themselves discordant on the key question now facing NATO — the ambitious task of agreeing on a revised "strategic concept" for the alliance. Recently, the NATO members have bickered openly about the future mission of the alliance, and some have even gone so far as to wonder whether NATO deserves to live on.

Rarely in world history has such a successful military and political alliance been so lacking in self-confidence and so uncertain about political

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support among its constituent members. NATO's identity crisis is particularly perplexing for those who are generally optimistic that what has worked in the past will work in the future and are accordingly reluctant to tear down institutions of proven value to make way for new world orders — that is, for those who take a conservative view of foreign policy. Why this debate? Why now?

The historical context

THE PROBLEM OF THE "NEW NATO," as every writer on the subject reminds us, began with the disappearance of the Soviet threat in 1989. This wholesale change in the geopolitical landscape fundamentally altered the West's security. In the United States, standing military forces and the defense industrial base were dramatically downsized. U.S. strategic forces were reoriented, and the National Laboratory system, which had been built to sustain the U.S. nuclear deterrent, was cut back and assigned other missions. Multilateral institutions, too, such as the U.N. and the IMF, have become objects of significant criticism. They also have been forced to face reform and overhaul.

The construction of a "New NATO" is therefore but one of the many transformations of previously reliable Euro-Atlantic institutions since 1989. Nor is change of this sort without precedent in the context of military strategy. The history of American foreign policy in the inter-war periods of the 20th century offers guidance on how to adapt our alliances to new strategic circumstances. To understand where the alliance is going as it redefines itself, it is useful to look at its historical antecedents.

From 1919 to 1939, the United States made decisions to withdraw from "European entanglements," to limit our participation in multi-lateral alliances, and, if not to rely upon, at least to benefit from a vague association of collective security. Americans have tended to draw from the negative experience of the 1930s an appropriate prejudice against isolationism and three general lessons, which should today inform our vision of the future of NATO. First, the withdrawal of the United States from Europe is a geostrategic mistake of the first order. Second, alliances and ad hoc coalitions of the liked-minded and the willing, within the constraints imposed by American exceptionalism, are on balance prudent. Third, collective security mechanisms, however well intended, have proven to be insufficient in themselves to the challenge of protecting the United States from threats to our interests and values; collective security can be a valuable supplement to, but never a substitute for, American vigilance.

Lessons learned from the second inter-war period, separating the end of World War II from the advent of the Cold War, tell us that the political process can recast existing alliances to meet new security requirements. In the famous "15 weeks" in 1949, Truman and Acheson reshaped Roosevelt's

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wartime alliance to serve the new purposes of containing the expansion of Soviet power and, in the process, of consolidating the victory of the Atlantic Alliance at the political level.

The foreign policy architects of NATO finished their work on the design of the new alliance in the spring of 1949. But the foundation of NATO was not really solidified until the beginning of the first Eisenhower administration in 1953. It was during this period that the U.S. forged the necessary political resolve to support the alliance. The Great Debate of 1950 between the Truman administration and its congressional critics settled the critical question of maintaining U.S. troops in Europe.

As it happened, the first military challenge to NATO did not directly involve the alliance. Instead, an ad hoc coalition headed by the United States mounted a defense of South Korea. Even though the United States had interests in Asia far greater than those of our NATO allies, in Korea, the Cold War threat was validated and with it NATO. Leaders rallied public and congressional support for the resources NATO would require on a different continent. In short, what may come to be called the first NATO alliance did not reach its geopolitical maturity until after the United States had both weathered a bruising but consensus-forming debate between the executive branch and Congress *and* proved it could fight with its strategic concept at long range without losing European allies.

It is useful to examine NATO's current identity crisis with one foot in 1931 and with the other in 1951. We are adapting NATO at a time in history when the threats to American national security are distant and, when seen in isolation, seemingly historically insignificant. But when viewed across the entire horizon, today's threats could prove troubling and warn of far more serious dangers to come. We are also adapting NATO at a time when the domestic constituency for this engagement is far from secure. We cannot point to a recent case where, in concert with our European allies, we have mounted a demonstrably successful military defense of our values and interests. The path from Mogadishu to Pristina to Baghdad has led from defeat to equivocation to incipient divisions with our continental European allies. The problematic performance of the U.N., OSCE, and other ad hoc coalitions has affected the dynamics of the recent debate on the expansion of NATO and endows the coming debate on its mission and purpose with heightened significance.

The first NATO debate: expansion

On April 30, 1998, the U.S. Senate voted to ratify the accession of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary as NATO allies, bringing 60 million people in Central Europe into the core Euro-Atlantic security structure in the first major adaptation of NATO in the post-Cold War period. The Senate vote brought to a conclusive end what had been over five years of continuous debate on the size and constituency of the NATO alliance.

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There was a remarkable lack of volatility in Senate debate and voting patterns on NATO, particularly from 1996 to the ratification vote in 1998. This fact alone demonstrates that the debate on the first post-Cold War expansion of the Atlantic Alliance did not become the millennial referendum on America's engagement with Europe that expansion opponents had hoped it would be and for which expansion advocates had prepared. Instead, the first debate was much narrower, centered on such issues as which European countries share the values of the Atlantic Alliance and, to a lesser extent, on what is meant by "Europe" — as in "a Europe, whole and free." Clearly, the debate did establish that the United States would remain in Europe and that NATO would continue to exist and begin to change to reflect new strategic circumstances. The debate also resolved another basic issue: that concern about Russia's future would not override NATO's future alteration or U.S. security interests in Central Europe. The result in strategic terms was an incremental adaptation of the constituency of alliance membership, not a radical expansion, as critics alleged.

The semantics of the debate itself tended to be largely retrospective. A discussion of values pervaded the content of the debate, but a dissection of the grand strategy of the West was absent from center stage. Even the campaign slogan of expansion proponents — "NATO is the military expression of a community of shared values" — was retrospective, once again an indication that an argument over the rationale for NATO's continued existence was not a centerpiece of these debates. Even modest technical issues related to strategy, such as the cost of expansion and what were later called "minimum military requirements," were peripheral. To understand why this was so, and how this debate came to influence the larger one on NATO's new strategic concept, requires a brief review of the two major arguments against NATO expansion.

The liberal opposition

When George Will wrote that there is no meaningful argument outside of conservative thought, he might have had the liberal-left opposition to NATO expansion in mind. This opposition held (in apparent contradiction) that (a) NATO is unnecessary because profound structural change has occurred in the affairs of nations, and (b) NATO's adaptation will antagonize the Russians and may precipitate nuclear war, which is the only legitimate concern of U.S. policy. To such critics, NATO had become unnecessary either because perpetual peace has broken out in Europe, or because one misstep with an unstable Russia could lead to Armageddon. In the event, neither of these contradictory rationales proved correct. Given the aggression of Slobodan Milosevic in the former Yugoslavia, the proposition of perpetual European peace appears dubious, and with the signing of the NATO-Russia Founding Act in March 1997, the case for intractable Russian opposition to NATO expansion collapses.

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The larger liberal-left case against NATO turns out to rest on a weighty assumption, namely, that it is possible to determine with certainty the future of relations between states based on an examination of global economic forces or through a greater sensitivity to the anthropomorphic motives of great powers. This claim to certain knowledge of the future is hubristic, especially as conservatives see it. We cannot know what the future will hold. It is therefore wiser and more prudent to proceed cautiously in affairs that may affect our national security. Hence, the incremental adaptation of NATO.

The poverty of the liberal-left criticism explains why the 1998 debate on NATO expansion did not attempt to settle the question of expansion's limits, if any. Instead, it was confined narrowly to the accession of Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, and the general question of an "Open Door" for subsequent candidates. The center of the American political spectrum doubted the liberal-left claim that the future of the international system (or even the fate of Russia) was foreseeable, and instead chose the cautious approach of an incremental adjustment to the security posture of the West.

An essentially conservative U.S. Senate decided for prudential reasons that America would be better off with Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary as allies than not. It also saw no reason that Slovenia, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Bulgaria, and even Slovakia might not become members of NATO, at least in principle. But for want of a larger strategic vision for NATO, the Senate chose to leave further expansion to some later date.

The second NATO debate: origins

If the liberal-left argument against NATO enlargement never amounted to much, the same cannot be said of the argument against expansion coming from the right. Indeed the current identity crisis of the alliance has its origins in the conservative critique.

Conservative doubts about the acceptance of new NATO members began to mature late in the Senate ratification debate. These doubts, however, were not focused on the question of expansion per se nor even on the qualifications of the candidate countries themselves. By and large, the issue of concern to conservative and predominantly Republican senators was: How can the continued military effectiveness of NATO be assured in the event of the inclusion of Central European democracies?

In fairness, prior to the formal ratification debate, some conservatives did question the rationale for NATO's continued existence. This dissent, which owes its intellectual origins to such famous Republicans as Sen. William Borah, holds that the United States can best preserve its power by limiting its alliance commitments and by avoiding antagonizing America's enemies. Like their liberal counterparts, whose argument theirs closely resembles, these conservative libertarians would have preferred to abolish NATO after the Cold War. Lacking the moxie to argue for dismantling NATO, they instead

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created arguments for the potentially achievable goal of blocking expansion. Because their arguments ill served this narrower objective, their views were not influential within the Senate.

The serious political debate on NATO's future purpose began with the reservations expressed by Senate critics of expansion in late 1997 and early 1998. While each senator expressed his concerns somewhat differently, each was predominantly concerned that overzealous expansion or enervating missions would dilute NATO's effectiveness. Sen. John Warner worried about the military weakness and readiness of the new allies and a further fractioning of alliance decision making. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison was concerned that an exposure to ethnic conflicts might distract NATO from the core mission of collective self-defense spelled out in Article V. Sens. Bob Smith and Don Nickles were concerned that a larger NATO might amount to an under-resourced and therefore vulnerable NATO. Finally, both Sens. Jon Kyl and John Ashcroft looked beyond the dilution arguments over decision making and resources to the potential danger that NATO could lose itself in a proliferation of missions, such as poorly-defined peace-keeping operations, or promiscuous out-of-area expeditions.

In the ratification vote of April 1998, the Senate ended the first debate on the adaptation of NATO in favor of an immediate round of expansion and maintaining a viable option for subsequent rounds. In passing the Kyl Amendment, which outlined a view of a new strategic concept, and in tabling the Ashcroft Amendment, which would have effectively limited the scope of alliance missions, the Senate strongly suggested that it was deferring debate on NATO's future — but that another debate was to come.

That second debate, on NATO's purpose, is now under way. It takes up the fundamental question of whether there remains a sufficient mutuality of interest across the Atlantic to make the NATO alliance viable for a second fifty years.

To the Washington summit

WITHIN WEEKS OF THE RATIFICATION VOTE, the Clinton administration recognized that the single, well-articulated debate on the accession of three Central European countries to NATO had split into four imprecisely framed issues, each of whose resolution affected the resolution of the others, all of which were potentially troublesome, and a failure on any of which might disrupt the Washington summit at the expense of the long-term prospects for the alliance.

The first two, arising out of the first debate on NATO enlargement, concerned military integration and the "Open Door." The summit would need to demonstrate that the first round of accession has been a success in terms of military effectiveness and integration and that NATO retains the political willingness to work with other aspirants along a road map toward eventual

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(but nevertheless comparatively near-term) accession. The "Open Door" problem, concerning a second round of NATO expansion — whether one would take place, and if so when and including whom — was at first widely thought likely to be the most contentious issue facing NATO at its fiftieth anniversary.

This has not proved to be the case. Instead, the difficult issues in the workup to the summit have been a product of the nascent second debate on NATO. This time, the debate does go to fundamental issues: proof of comity at the core of the Atlantic Alliance between the United States, England, Germany, and France; and agreement on NATO's strategic concept in which that common purpose is specifically expressed. Disturbingly, the muffled debate on the purposes of NATO, which had been touched on and ignored, now seems to be emerging *sotto voce* as a contrapuntal theme in every issue to be addressed at the NATO summit: Are Europe and the United States drifting apart?

By the fall of 1998, European complaints had matured into a broad case against 'American hegemony.'

The extremely touchy elements of this debate include such issues as burden-sharing, that is, the relative weight of the costs of NATO borne by the United States and its allies; what alliance members think of Russia, the successor state to our common Cold War enemy; the circumstances under which U.S. troops will deploy outside the area of NATO; and the question of leadership within the alliance.

At the Sintra ministerial and again at the Madrid summit, the Europeans, particularly the French, objected to what some viewed as American high-handedness in limiting NATO accession candidates (which followed hard on the heels of America's appropriately brusque dismissal of the French claim to NATO's AFSOUTH Command as the price for returning to NATO's military structure.) By the fall of 1998, European complaints had matured into a broad case against "American hegemony." During the Kosovo crisis of October 1998, the French loudly questioned whether NATO had the legal right to conduct operations in the absence of specific U.N. authorization. The new coalition government in Germany found fault with the nuclear policy of the alliance and, presumably, with the strategic nuclear policy of the United States. And no European ally, with the notable exception of Britain, showed the slightest interest in joining the United States in pressing military action against Saddam Hussein in Operation Desert Fox.

Some prophets of NATO decline saw the broad skepticism among the European allies that greeted Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's presentation of the rationale for NATO's new strategic concept in December 1998 at the NATO ministerial meeting as evidence of "deep structural forces" dividing the interests of the United States and Europe. The structural argument

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advanced by such NATO "declinists" as Stephen Walt, writing in the *National Interest*, has three major tenets: (1) the absence of the Soviet threat and the improbability of an alternative hegemonic threat have deprived NATO of the cohesion that held it together in the past; (2) U.S. economic and security interests are shifting inexorably away from Europe and towards Asia; and (3) generational change is causing the cultural values of the civilizations of Europe and America to diverge.

This argument suffers from a number of serious flaws. For example, it ignores the strategic reasons America is in NATO in the first place; and it fails to explain why these Euro-Atlantic bickerings are occurring at this point in time and not, say, when there are more security challenges in Asia. But it does amount to a conservative case against NATO, and that, in turn, is the most serious argument that has been offered to date against the alliance. It calls for a response: the conservative case *for* NATO.

For a 'New NATO'

THERE ARE FIVE BROAD PLANKS in the conservative case for preserving an American-led NATO and adapting its capabilities to the specific circumstances of the early 21st century.

NATO is at the center of all U.S. military strategies. Critics have read far too much into the current absence of a serious rival to U.S. interests on the world stage. This happy circumstance will surely change. If, for example, a threat were to emerge from a resurgent Russia (and given the events of the past six months in Russia, that is at least conceivable), there would not be time in which to reconstitute a NATO-like alliance on the front line.

In the event of concerted aggression by militant Islamic states, perhaps in possession of weapons of mass destruction, NATO will protect our flank and secure our supply lines. And, finally, if the security interests of the West are drawn to the containment of Chinese expansion, NATO will guard the strategic rear of the alliance and make the forward deployment of U.S. forces possible. In all cases, NATO is the common denominator in the grand strategy of the West. The imperative of consolidating the center is axiomatic in military strategy, and NATO stands at the center of our alliance structure.

If the centrality of NATO were not enough, there is also the appeal of the plasticity of the alliance, particularly our ability to refocus its strategic concept. Conservatives, especially, who have a proud tradition as realists, must conclude that the new threats to transatlantic security come from out-of-area, and that NATO can be adapted to counter these threats to our interests.

NATO reflects the American way of war. Politically untidy though they may be, our arrangements with Europe reflect a national consensus on the part of Americans that we intend to prosecute our objectives in war not unilaterally but in coalition with our allies. Having made this decision, mechanisms like NATO become a fact of life. In order to fight effectively as a coali-

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tion, an alliance has to plan and train together as well as exchange views on the concept of joint operations. Without the mechanisms of coordination developed within NATO, the success of ad hoc coalitions, like Desert Storm, would be doubtful.

Obviously, there is concern about the inevitable compromises that keep coalition partners in the fold and that may impinge to some degree on U.S. sovereignty. But conservatives should recognize that these modest measures are necessary in the conduct of foreign affairs. Moreover, conservatives, in particular, should tend to favor coalition mechanisms because they limit the potential overseas ambitions of governments — even our own — and they provide the means to share the financial burdens of defense with our European allies.

NATO still plays a decisive role in consolidating the West's Cold War victory.

NATO remains "the military expression of a community of shared values." It is often said that NATO is more than just a military alliance; it has served as the political foundation on which Europe has been rebuilt over the past 50 years. NATO played and still plays a decisive role in consolidating the victory of the West in the Cold War. It is also the only institution that appears capable of countering the crimes against humanity being committed in the Balkans.

It is not unreasonable to foresee that NATO as a political vehicle will continue to broaden the Euro-Atlantic community to include democracies as distant as Estonia or Finland in Northern Europe and Romania and Bulgaria in Southeast Europe. Over time, non-NATO allies of the United States in our hemisphere, such as Argentina and Chile, may seek a closer political relationship with NATO. In the future, and in the context of new missions, NATO might also institutionalize coordination with Israel, which maintains an historical relationship with the United States and has recently concluded a strategic arrangement with Turkey, NATO's easternmost member. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that a reformed alliance focused on a new set of missions might welcome a more formal relationship with a country that shares our values and could contribute materially to the security and strategic depth of the Euro-Atlantic region. Regardless of how NATO's political role is manifested in the next decade, conservatives will tend to support institutions of invested values dedicated to their protection. It should not come as a surprise to conservatives that Judeo-Christian values over the past millennium and democratic ideals over the past 350 years have required protection by force of arms. For the past 50 years, NATO has provided that protection with a very light hand.

NATO's mission in Europe is unfinished. Even if one concedes that America's interests will eventually diverge from those of our European allies, it is still far too soon for the United States to disengage from Europe. The

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most obvious reason for this is that the Europeans do not want us to leave in the foreseeable future.

We have seen a number of instances in which other institutions have been unable to cope with serious European problems. NATO's effectiveness compares favorably to the performance of UNPROFOR at Sebrenica and throughout Bosnia. And with the failure of the October 1998 Kosovo agreement — which called for peace monitors from the OSCE — Europeans and Americans agreed that only a NATO mission could keep the peace. While critics have argued that U.S. vital interests are not at stake in Bosnia or Kosovo, the persistent pattern of political and military failure at the periphery of our power (by coalitions other than NATO) should produce renewed respect for NATO's singular role in protecting the Atlantic democracies.

A world without NATO is a world we know little about, and what we can imagine is troubling.

The European experiment for which NATO is the predicate is incomplete, and it would be foolish in the extreme to disassemble the security structure that has made modern Europe possible. A unified Germany is only seven years old and much remains to be decided about its direction, its purpose, and how it intends to manage its preponderant power in Europe. A European currency is a few months old, and the political affects of partial monetary union are as yet unknown. While 60 million souls in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary are now formally NATO allies, the integration of these countries into NATO's military structure and the achievement of full interoperability are at least a decade in the future. Moreover, there are another 50 million people in Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria who hope to come into Europe from the cold and who aspire to join the economic and security institutions of the Euro-Atlantic.

Finally, and most important, there is a war of aggression and genocide in the Balkans where NATO forces are engaged. To paraphrase Lady Thatcher, now is not the time to go wobbly on NATO.

If it is the end of NATO, it is the end of a lot more than NATO. Advocates of NATO expansion, and proponents of NATO in general, often ask critics to imagine the past fifty years without the alliance. Critics who argue that NATO is unnecessary must also maintain that U.S. security is defensible in the future without what has come to be regarded as the West's insurance policy. A world without NATO would be a world with a radically changed political order — one about which we know little, and what we can imagine is troubling.

We can imagine that the United States would be without an immediate brake on Russian imperial recidivism. We would be unable to moderate and

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guide the rise of German power. We would lack incentives to keep Turkey engaged in Europe. The reinforcement and defense of Israel *in extremis* would be vastly more difficult. The boundary lines within which we now contain rogue states and pursue the containment of weapons of mass destruction would have to be abandoned and moved thousands of miles closer to the territory of the United States. The defense of the Gulf States would be problematic at best. And a credible Pacific security policy would be heavily burdened by the requirement to maintain major forces in an unsettled Atlantic region. At a minimum, the disestablishment of NATO would require military expenditures at near wartime levels.

A CONSERVATIVE VIEW — and I believe the correct view — is that the current international system in which NATO serves as cornerstone has been remarkably friendly to U.S. interests and has not imposed particularly onerous financial burdens on our economy. Overturning the conditions that brought about such a relatively felicitous state of affairs risks exposing the United States and our remaining allies to a much harsher international environment, one that may make far greater demands of American blood and treasure.

In the light of these strategic and prudential considerations and the comparatively light economic demands the alliance imposes, why does the burden of NATO chafe so on the French and other Europeans? Why would influential Americans, such as Sen. Hutchison, begin to toy with the idea of leaving European security to the Europeans while the United States responds to out-of-area missions unilaterally? It is unusual, to say the least, for great nations and long-time allies to pursue a path that is so clearly contrary to their long-term interests and that does away with an institution they have taken 50 years to construct.

The explanation lies in the exceptional alignment of political weakness among the major powers of the alliance. As the editors of the *Economist* observed recently, "It is a lonely conservative soul who peers around the horizon of European politics these days." Notwithstanding the presence of President Chirac, the Jospin government is further to the left than any French government in recent history. The election of a Red/Green coalition in Germany is without precedent. The addition of a post-Communist government in Italy moves the ratio of left-of-center governments to center or conservative governments in NATO to a remarkable 15-4. (Spain, Poland, Hungary and, arguably, the United States are what remain of the center-right leadership that 15 years ago included President Reagan, Prime Minister Thatcher, and Chancellor Kohl.) And never in 138 years has the United States been led by an impeached president who faced possible removal by the same legislative body charged with ratifying the actions of the president in foreign affairs. The conclusion is inescapable: This is a very dangerous time to attempt the wholesale restructuring of our security system.

"Monty Python's Flying Circus" reminds us that no one expects the

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Spanish Inquisition. That is, history is not immune to accidents. The danger now is that the accidental, but temporary, weakness in the alliance and the disorienting effects of this weakness on public opinion may produce the conditions in which a truly grand mistake could be made. Contrary to the suggestions of the critics, it will not be the Europeans who decide that their interests lie elsewhere and withdraw from NATO. If anyone, it will be the Americans, who in response to what is little more than European posturing, might make the tragic mistake of disengaging from Europe. For better or worse, Europe cannot disengage from itself.

Coping with political weakness

As LAMPEDUSA WROTE OF ITALY, "If we want things to remain as they are, things will have to change." This is the challenge for NATO and for those who believe that the alliance should remain the cornerstone of stability in the vital Euro-Atlantic region and continue to be an appropriate expression of and vehicle for American leadership in world affairs.

If the experience of the 20th century is any guide to the problems of the next, one would expect that this generation of American leaders will find a less than perfect arrangement of burden-sharing with the Europeans and discover new terms of art to paper over our differences. We will probably agree to disagree on the role of the state, the source of legitimacy in international law, and the purpose of American power. Since Gen. Eisenhower found a way to placate Gen. de Gaulle in North Africa, each generation in Washington has found a way through the thicket of cultural and ideological differences with Europe. While the correlation between the economic and military power of Europe and America is always shifting, there is no overwhelming reason why Americans cannot come to an accommodation with the Europeans on the direction and management of our military coalition.

Similarly, the aspirations set in motion by the Treaty of Rome for an independent European foreign policy and autarkic military power have always in the past been arrested by the Europeans' own finely honed sense of geopolitical realism. At the end of the day — and often only at the end of the day — even the most virulent French chauvinist tends to reach the pragmatic conclusion that without a permanent alliance with American power, Europe risks huge expense and courts possible destruction. All things being equal, the coming debate on the mission and purposes of the alliance should end where previous fundamental debates over the past 50 years have ended — imperfectly, but with a working agreement on our common purposes.

Still, one wonders why the United States precipitated a debate on our strategic concept and out-of-area missions at a time of maximum political weakness in Washington and political incoherence throughout Europe. In the light of an indifferent military performance in the Balkans, failures of

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political resolve there and elsewhere, and the enervation of military strength throughout the alliance, one wonders if NATO would not have been better served by following Napoleon's counsel that military forces should learn their strategic direction by marching. One also wonders what the judgment of history will be if, in this period of political weakness and uncertainty, America lets the greatest military alliance ever assembled slip away.

Smacks it not something of the policy?

— Shakespeare, *King John*

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Educating Mary Barrosse

Schools and How We Pay for Them

By Amity Shlaes

In February 1997 a 38-year-old mother of three from East Dorset, Vt., called her state representative with a question. She had heard on the news that Vermont's Supreme Court had declared the local school funding system unconstitutional. Mary Barrosse had two daughters in Dorset Elementary school and another child entering nursery school. Part of the reason she and her husband, a doctor with a family practice, had made their home in East Dorset was because the district invested heavily in its schools. What exactly did the change mean?

Mary Barrosse's representative did not give her good news. Vermont's courts had overturned the state's long-standing system of school finance. Under the old system, town property taxes paid directly for something like three-fourths of the cost of local schools. Now, at least for a while, the towns would still collect the money. But they would have to send it to the state government, which would set property tax rates for everyone and then return a flat block grant of $5,000 or so per child to each town for education.

The court had said it would no longer be all right for one school district to spend more money on its children than another. That wasn't giving Vermont children an equal opportunity to learn. The court acknowledged that the system of local property taxes paying for local schools was old, but said that it must be ended. It said today's children "cannot be limited by eigh-

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Amity Shlaes writes about taxes for the editorial page of the Wall Street Journal. *This article is adapted from* The Greedy Hand: How Taxes Drive Americans Crazy and What to Do About Them. *Copyright © 1999 by Amity Shlaes. Reprinted with permission of Random House, Inc.* *Shlaes was a Bradley Fellow at The Heritage Foundation while working on the book.*

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teenth century standards." It referred to *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, the landmark federal case that had taken on school segregation. The court likened the school spending disparities to racial discrimination. Its message was serious: social justice on a grand scale was involved here. The money had to go to the state capital, so that it could be given out fairly.

SCHOOLS AND HOW WE PAY for them are two things Americans feel strongly about. Over the course of the past three decades, state courts and governments like Vermont's have moved repeatedly in the name of equity to change how schools are financed. For equity's sake, they have fiddled with the local connection parents have with their schools. And every time they have done so, they have met with incomprehension and even fury from parents. Like Mary Barrosse, they begin to wonder: Why is this happening? Where is the money going? Why didn't someone ask me?

Over the months that followed her first telephone call, Vermont's legislature moved to implement the court's ruling, and Mary Barrosse tried to figure out where she stood. She learned that there were many in Vermont's state legislature who agreed with the court as a matter of principle and had pushed the case along. Many of the lawmakers were teachers, or members of teachers' families, or school administrators, who thought Montpelier could do a better job of controlling the money. Others had even campaigned on the theme, arguing the new regime would cut property taxes. Many Democrats generally backed the change, and many Republicans opposed it, but it wasn't entirely a partisan debate: There were Republican supporters of the switch, and Democratic opponents. The state's governor, Howard Dean, was proud of the change, and would later call the new era of statewide funding "a joyous time."

It became clear to Barrosse that, now that the Supreme Court had ruled, party line and individual decisions didn't matter much. Even those lawmakers who opposed the change had little choice now but to join in undertaking a sort of Robin Hood action to help poorer Vermont towns. It soon became clear that some of the school money from wealthier towns would go to subsidize schools in towns with lower tax bases. The budgets of the schools in the wealthier towns would probably have to be cut.

At home, Barrosse found herself contemplating what might be cut at Dorset Elementary. Her area spent several thousand dollars per child over the $5,100 cap the state was imposing. She put down the phone and worried. She had never thought much about school finance or property taxes, and she wished the problem would go away. She remembers thinking: "They can keep their taxes. Just let us have our schools."

Indeed, under the state legislature's plan, known as Act 60, the new statewide property tax rate would be $1,100 for every $100,000 in assessed value of a home. For low income owners, this rate was eased. But for those with lots of property — the 500-acre farmer — there was no escape from a

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giant tax hike. If towns wanted to spend more than their block grant, they could raise that extra money on their own. But they had to give a share of every additional dollar they raised to poorer towns.

Act 60 would split Vermont's 251 towns into two groups: "receiving towns," which would benefit from subsidy, and "sending towns," which were deemed prosperous enough to share their money. In Montpelier, lawmakers spoke with a touch of *Schadenfreude* about the wealthy towns sharing their prosperity; "gold towns," thriving ski resorts for the most part, were to be among some of the biggest "senders."

Dorset was clearly going to be a "sender," a sender that had to undertake serious cuts. Yet later in 1997, when lawmakers took final action to pass Act 60, the scope of the cuts shocked Barrosse. A health teacher and two classroom teachers would be laid off, raising the student teacher ratio at Dorset Elementary to about 20-1 from 15-1. Technical education and shop classes would end. Other cuts were coming in music, art, and computers. In all, Dorset Elementary School's budget was to be cut 30 percent. But the cuts would feel even deeper. State and federal law said the school could not cut its special education programs for handicapped children. The superintendent's budget — administrative jobs — also were not to be touched. So that 30 percent had to come out of the regular classroom. Teacher salaries would have to come down.

'They can keep their taxes. Just let us have our schools.'

Barrosse, whose third child, Bernie, was due to enter kindergarten after all these cuts were in place, pondered the situation over and over. She thought about private school, but it was costly, and there wasn't really a good school near her that seemed right for her kids. She had heard the news that towns could spend above the flat rate if they levied extra property taxes for that purpose. But when she asked, she found out that Dorset would have to double her property tax to something like $6,200 just to sustain the school the way it was. Some towns would have to raise taxes seven times as high to keep the schools they had.

Barrosse couldn't believe what she was hearing. Now she began to read about the problem in earnest. She learned that it was sometimes called "equalization," and that it had happened all over New England. Maine had its equalization story in the 1970s; New Hampshire was expecting its Supreme Court to change everything some time later in 1997. Equalization had happened on the West Coast, too, and in Texas. All over the country, citizens of states were fighting treacherous little battles over the changes.

Barrosse started phoning around, and she found that many of her friends felt the way she did. There were things they didn't like about the state's schools. They weren't happy, for example, that the state had no strong regime for testing kids, so there was no barometer to tell how Vermont was

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doing. But there was also a lot to like about Vermont's public schools. The state and towns already spent an average of more than $6,800 per child on education, $1,000 above the national average. Were Vermont's schools really so bad that the whole system needed to be ripped up?

Many of the unhappy parents were people in "gold towns," towns for which the state was planning little property tax bombs. One of them was John Irving, the author of *The World According to Garp*. Irving's five-year-old was just starting school, and he was furious at the change. "Like a lot of families in this area, this choice came for us because of the schools. Now we are seeing those schools decimated," he told a reporter. As a Democrat, he was angry at the Democrats who supported the change. "I'm to the left of most of these people. This is my party that's wreaking havoc." He saw the whole thing as ill-conceived class warfare against the gold towns, class warfare that wasn't even going to work. "It is easy to discriminate against a minority if that minority is allegedly well to do." He said he was thinking of pulling his son out of the public schools.

Barrosse also found people in the "receiving towns" who were angry. Jeffrey Wennberg, the mayor of Rutland, which was a receiving town, was furious. "These are a bunch of pathological redistributionists," he said. Vermont to him was like a house, a dear house that he had moved to and loved and made his home. But the legislature didn't see that. "They wanted to change things but they didn't change them incrementally. They just blew up the whole house."

Many people concluded that equalization's advocates in Montpelier and in the courts had a hidden agenda: They were using an equity argument to get control of the property tax kitty. Gaining control of the property taxes meant that Montpelier was gaining control of $680 million, a figure that was higher than its revenues from all other state taxes combined. Legislators were already bragging about their new clout. "Money follows power," commented Wennberg bitterly.

At summer's end, while picking apples for her son's nursery school, Barrosse talked with other mothers. They had heard that Gov. Howard Dean was hosting a meeting of Democratic governors at the Equinox, a historic inn in Manchester. It was well known that Gov. Dean supported the shift, and that he supported Act 60. Barrosse and the other mothers decided they would do something.

Standing on the back of a red pickup truck that belonged to Barrosse's husband, protestors talked about why they were unhappy with the change. Even though the night was cold — "we held candles and shivered," Barrosse recalls — more than 500 people showed up, many more than anyone had anticipated. The number sounded small, but it was one of the biggest political rallies in years. The state had called out volunteer firemen, with hoses, in case the event got out of hand. The protestors carried signs that made pointed jokes, like "Soured on Howard." One speaker played on the fact that the

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governor was a medical doctor. She asked him "if one leg was broken, would you break the other to equalize the pain?" They talked about how the "equalized yield pool," the technical language for the change, was really a "shark pool."

The Equinox event resonated in Vermont, in part because of location. Vermonters knew that the hotel stood on the site of an old tavern that had been there since Colonial days, when the Green Mountain Boys met to plot their battle against the British in the American Revolution. The governor's inadvertent choice of the location was a bitter reminder of what Montpelier's work was doing to Vermont's old tradition of home rule.

For more than 200 years, Vermont's tiny towns had conducted their business on an annual town meeting day. In many towns every citizen, even those who are not elected officials, is allowed to vote on the budget. All Vermont watched as the lawmakers wrote Act 60, the implementing law. In late June 1997, or soon after Act 60, the state's education department asked a polling company called Macro to survey voters on their opinions; at that time 42 percent of those surveyed said that they thought Act 60 was "unlikely" to bring "substantially equal educational opportunity" to Vermont, while 46 percent said it was "likely." By October, the tide was turning. Fifty percent said the change was "unlikely" to achieve its goals, compared with 40 percent who still thought it could work. One in four thought that the program was "unlikely" to benefit even the children in poorer towns. Soon Vermont's towns, which had never felt particularly divided before, did indeed find themselves pitted against one another into two opposing armies, an army of Haves and an army of Have Nots. The *New York Times*, which sent a reporter to cover Act 60 and its reception, quoted Louis Costanza, a retiree from Long Island, who expected the property tax on his three-bedroom home in Winhall to go to $6,000 from $800. "They see a lot of the Mercedes and Landrovers and Wagoneers and say: 'those yuppies have a lot of money. How am I going to get it?' They've been dreaming about this for a long time." Cameron Page, a Stowe mother and school board member, met a woman from a receiving town at a hockey match. Page told the *Times* that the neighbor "actually leaned over to me and said 'Nyeh, nyeh.'"

Vermont's towns were pitted against one another: an army of Haves and an army of Have Nots.

There were those, though, who expressed their anger in an even coarser fashion. Vermont, the self-advertised "picture postcard" state, began to see outright hostility. Cheryl Rivers, a state senator who led the writing of Act 60 from the legislature's finance committee, was one of the targets. She sold her old Dodge Colt, only to learn that opponents of property tax change were the buyers. They parked the car in front of the state house and offered bypassers a chance to hit it with a baseball bat. The price was $5 a whack.

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Vermont, Mary Barrosse's "safe, clean, place, where everyone could be friends with everyone" was moving toward civil war.

THE VERMONTERS' TAX PROTEST WAS, in its way, a classically American event. Property taxes have been a touchy subject for Americans off and on since the days of the colonies. In 1768, citizens from North Carolina's Orange and Rowan counties warned that "a few shillings in taxes might seem trifling to gentlemen roiling in affluence, but to Poor People who must have their Bed and Bed-clothes, yea their Wives Petticoats taken and sold to Defray [taxes] how Tremenjouse judge must be the consequences." Fries's rebellion, one of several early tax rebellions that shook the young nation, was a property tax rebellion; 30 traitors were convicted, and two sentenced to death, but President Adams pardoned them all.

People vote with their feet. They will give up more space for better schools. They will choose Dorset over Danby.

After this bumpy start, though, things grew more peaceful. One reason was that those property taxes soon came to be spent on something people cherished — their town schools. A hundred years ago, property taxes and schools were a very local affair in most states. What we imagine of the arrangement — four farmers meeting on a village green to pay for a schoolmistress, who also lodged at their houses — is not inaccurate. Vermont's first constitution, from 1777, reflected this vision by making local funding the explicit rule: "a school or schools shall be established in each town, by the legislature, for the convenient instruction of youth, with such salaries to the masters to be paid by the town; making proper use of school lands in each town, thereby to enable them to instruct youth at low prices."

Most constitutions were something like this early one: They used phrases like "thorough and efficient" to describe the sort of education they wanted their citizens' children to receive. The implication was that towns would provide that education. A wealthier town might chose to spend more; a poorer town less. That was their business and their lot. In short, a local matter.

Economists and education scholars say a local property tax, spent locally, is a "good tax." People who pay property taxes for schools they control see what they are getting; if they like it, they push to "buy more," and pass or tolerate tax increases. If they don't like it, they will try to "buy" less from government by pushing for a tax cut. "Local property taxes, spent locally, are a fee for service arrangement disguised as a tax," says William Fischel, a professor at Dartmouth who studied the effects of equalization.

In their explanations, the economists often refer to something called the "Tiebout hypothesis," after Charles Tiebout, a scholar of public finance. In the 1950s Tiebout tried to work out what was happening in suburban towns.

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He found and articulated what most Americans already know instinctively: Towns compete for families, through their schools, their parks, their safety records. People, in simple language, will "vote with their feet." They will give up more space for better schools. They will choose Dorset over Danby.

This competition has a very healthy effect on almost everyone. It allows the Danbys to choose not to invest in public schools, if they like. But that choice brings its own punishment: So few people are attracted to the Danbys that there aren't enough people around with valuable homes. Those who are there have to pay extra property taxes because there are fewer people to shoulder the burden. The result is the situation in many of Vermont's poorer towns: high property tax rates.

But the Tiebout rule helps the Dorsets, setting off a virtuous cycle there. People like to move to places like Dorset, and do so in numbers. When enough of them move, there are more people around to share the burden of school costs. If a town like Dorset attracts enough homeowners, and values of homes go up enough, citizens can then have their cake and eat it too. They get high property values, low tax rates, and good schools.

This is good for everyone in Dorset. It is good for lower income people and renters, since they get the benefit of good schools. It is even good for empty nesters who pay lots of property taxes and have no children in school. In the end, they collect their benefit from the situation when they sell their house, at a higher price than they might in a town with bad schools. Caroline Hoxby, a Harvard economist who studied school finance, put it this way. "You don't have to care about education. You just have to know that the people who might buy your house care about education." The Scarsdales, Oak Parks and Palo Altos of this world were evidence of the Tiebout hypothesis. Chester Finn, an education scholar and official in President Bush's education department, spelled the phenomenon out in non-economic terms: "when they know what they are getting, there is no amount people won't spend for their children's education."

GRADUALLY, THOUGH, IN THIS CENTURY, the federal government and the states began to sever the connection between tax and school, thereby undermining Tiebout's virtuous cycle. They started to foot some of the costs of education. In the 1950s and 1960s, the issue of funding came up in the nation's civil rights discussion. Schools in poor urban neighborhoods often had less to offer their students than the plush schools in the suburbs. In Washington, the U.S. Supreme Court addressed this issue by handing down the opinions that gave the nation busing. And states and the federal government often paid for that busing. Very soon, though, it became clear that busing was not ending inequality in America. So civil rights advocates tried another way. They argued before the Supreme Court that every child across the nation was entitled to equal spending under the "equal protection" clause of the Constitution.

Our nation's high court would not go that far. In a famous case,

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Rodriguez, the court refused to say that every locality must spend the same amount on every child, or that school finance must be rearranged to make that possible. Lewis Powell wrote that education "is not among the rights afforded explicit protection under our Federal constitution." So the civil rights forces in the states tried another route. They sued under their state's constitutions. The first such case, *Serrano* v. *Priest,* challenged California's education system. It said all parts of California must spend about the same amount per child on education. This meant, in the words of one economist who looked at the matter, "tax-financed differences in spending per pupil were, for all practical purposes, eradicated." After *Serrano*, California ended its old local property tax system. It planned to force richer neighborhoods to subsidize poorer neighborhoods. This meant that, at least in the short run, schools would be more equal.

But *Serrano* killed the virtuous cycle in California. It meant that families started to lose control of what they were getting for the money. Like Mary Barrosse, Californians felt rooked. When that arrangement broke down, people started to get angry. Californians were losing control of their local schools. They didn't want to pay more. The consequence was a property tax revolt unlike any that had occurred in postwar America. School equalization so angered them that it moved Californians to pass Proposition 13, a draconian law capping and freezing property taxes.

Serrano soon began to replicate itself. Texas had its *Serrano* case. So did Maine, and New Mexico. Later came New Jersey, Kentucky, and Ohio. Usually, the American Civil Liberties Union helped out in making the case for equalization. Often they started with a set-piece example of inequality in their state. For example, Robert Gensburg, the lead plaintiff in the Vermont case, noted that Hardwick, a relatively poor town, found that it had to lay off a remedial reading teacher for the first grade. He contrasted Hardwick with Stowe, where the town was voting on whether to appropriate $84,000 to repair the high school's tennis courts. In all these states, and soon they came to number over 20, the goal was the same: power to the state capital, so that it might regulate and enforce equal spending.

THEN THERE WAS THE EVIDENCE that Montpelier was already moving to centralize. Act 60, the legislation, contained numerous new mandates that the states would impose on schools. It was going to introduce new statewide rules on local standards, set up a new barrage of requirements for the schools, and subject the schools to review every two years by a commissioner to "determine whether students in each Vermont public school are provided educational opportunities substantially equal to those provided in other public schools." The threat to schools that didn't meet the criteria was clear: With its newfound control of the purse, the state could close those schools. What particularly irked citizens was that the state was spending quite a lot to pay for its new power center: $5 million to establish the oversight office, for starters.

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What upset the Vermonters most, though, was that there seemed no way of going back. In the winter of 1997 and 1998, some towns were still considering raising property taxes to improve schools. State lawmakers actually discouraged them from doing that — in other words, encouraged them to stay dependent so that they could keep their "receiving" status. Melissa Perkins, a citizen of Shaftsbury, a receiving town, studied the state government's report on her town and discovered it would indeed be saving 11 percent on property taxes. But it also needed to spend an extra $107,388 in compliance costs to get ready for the new system. And it now found itself in an awkward situation. The town had been planning to increase its school spending significantly, by $287,559. But its planners discovered that if they did, they would lose "too much" of Act 60's benefit. Perkins had discovered one of the many perversities in the new law: For towns with lower property tax bases, it actually discouraged education spending. Why should they choose to raise property taxes and pay more if it meant risking money and their status as a "receiving" town? The governor, wrote Perkins, "wants the people of Shaftsbury to spend $107,388 to support Act 60, but not $287,559 to support our children. What's wrong with this picture?"

The threat to schools was clear: With the power of the purse, the state could close schools.

The saddest part of the story was that even after all its costs, equalization didn't really work. Some extra money did indeed reach poor towns. But those results came at the Tiebout price. Like Californians, the taxpayers in other states were angry. In New Mexico, equal spending became the rule, but it was equal spending at a very low level. In other states, too, spending was equal, but the amount was not very high. Even in places where spending did go up, the schools still seemed to be in trouble. The federal government, the state of New Jersey and the city of Newark spend more per child on Newark children than on the children of many of New Jersey's fanciest suburbs. But even in Newark, with all the spending, the results were not satisfactory. Newark children still failed, and Newark high schoolers still could not read when they graduated.

There were other problems. One was that spending just wasn't making it to the students. Instead, it often ended up going to bureaucracy. Kansas City had been a famous landmark in the battle over segregation. So when a court ordered the state to pour money into Kansas City magnet schools in the hope of making them the envy of the state, the nation watched. The school district spent $30 million a year busing students to the new magnet schools. It raised student funding up to $11,700 a pupil, a figure that approached double the national average. It provided the new schools with television and animation studios, a robotics lab, a zoo, and a model United Nations with simultaneous translation capabilities. People in other parts of Missouri were outraged at the court's decision, and even the judge who made the ruling

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was able to explain why. He told Paul Ciotti, an education writer who studied the matter for the Cato Institute, "I had to balance two constitutional issues. One was no taxation without representation and the other was kids' right to an equal opportunity. I decided in favor of the schoolchildren."

But the result of the Kansas City experiment merely showed that trying to generate equality with money was a frustrating exercise. Computers stayed in crates on shelves until they were obsolete. The new inventory was so large that the school administrators lost track of it. Meanwhile, student scores didn't improve. The prosperous families, most of them white, stayed away. Kansas City's schools remained ghettoized.

The lesson was clear: You can't fight for equity while ignoring taxation.

The worst thing about the education battles was that they never seemed to end. This is because, while every state court said that equality is important, every legislature has a different definition of "equal." In some states, such as New Hampshire, the definition of equal meant fulfilling a minimum — the Supreme Court said "adequate." In other states, such as Vermont, it meant equal spending for everyone. The result was bitter quibbling, quibbling that never ended. In April 1998, the *New York Times* carried a feature story on the national scene. Its headline read: "Patchwork of School Financing Schemes Offers Few Answers and Much Conflict." It reported that in New Mexico, decades after the state's original equalization change, districts and their lawyers were still fighting over cost-of-living adjustments, teacher salaries, and the education pie in general.

Nowhere was the price of the whole exercise clearer than in California. The California failure was such a grand one that observers of all backgrounds could not help but note it. Decades after *Serrano* Jonathan Kozol, an education writer who advocates rules enforcing equal spending, wrote a book about unequal school spending called *Savage Inequalities*. In it he noted that though "the plaintiffs won the victory they sought, it was to some extent a victory of losers. Though the state ranks eighth in per capita income in the nation, the share of its income that now goes to public education is a meager 3.8 percent — placing California forty-sixth among the 50 states. Its average class size is the largest in the nation." He added bitterly, "Beverly Hills still operates a high school that, in academic excellence, can rival those of Princeton and Winnetka. Baldwin Park still operates a poorly funded and inferior system." Nor did the rule of even distribution change student performance: Thomas Downes, a scholar, found that the standardized test scores showed that pupil performance didn't much change after equalization shifts.

The most compelling evidence of the Tiebout hypothesis, though, was not all the destruction it brought. It was that when towns and cities did try to reform their way out of the equalization method it was nearly always

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through an effort to recapture the financing of their old local school. Everywhere, the accent was on striving to regain local control. Across the country, wherever possible, people tried to find a way to reestablish the connection that centralization took away.

In California, parents developed their own method of getting around state control. They established local foundations — super PTAs — to serve their local schools through charity gifts from parents. By the mid-1990s, more than 500 such foundations had formed, raising, together, some $30 million a year.

In New York City, the only parent movement to make the papers in years was a parent uprising at a school in Greenwich Village. A teacher was being laid off; the parents banded together and decided they would pay for a replacement. The city's schools chancellor resisted; but after enormous public pressure, the parents were allowed to spend their money.

Wealthy and middle-class parents were not the only ones who felt the urge to control finances at their local school. In Georgia, Democrats have taken the lead in restoring the local connection. They allowed the counties to raise additional funds for school construction by voting for a county-level increase in sales tax. Within two years after a state amendment made it possible for them to fund their schools this way, 129 counties, poor and rich, passed sales tax increases. They raised a total of $3.5 billion. Because the result was local — they could see the buildings going up — people were happy to spend.

In an article entitled "School Reforms to Nowhere," columnist William Raspberry dismissed the doctrine of centralization and laid out the case for a return to local control. Writing about Maryland's Prince George's County, he noted that,

> County Executive Wayne K. Curry, School Board Chair Alvin Thornton, and NAACP President Hardi L. Jones say they are looking forward to a future in which neighborhood schools, not mandatory busing, will be the salient feature. Neighborhood schools?! But that's what the (mostly white) opponents of busing were screaming for a quarter-century ago when the NAACP brought its desegregation suit. Neighborhood schools, the conventional wisdom then had it, was merely a code phrase for continued segregation. What has happened since then is that blacks have come into political ascendancy.

These results underline an important truth — something Mary Barrosse, and indeed most every other parent, knows. It is that Chester Finn, the education scholar, was right. There is no limit to what people will spend on their children's education. But this holds only as long as the money they spend really goes to their children. Taking away that connection costs something. Directly or indirectly, it costs everyone, even those children on whose behalf the change was made. The lesson was clear: You can't fight for equity

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while ignoring taxation. If you do, you don't even get the equity you seek.

OVER THE WINTER FOLLOWING ACT 60, Vermonters mounted a dramatic, disparate effort to recapture financial control of their children's education. The effort began in the state's very smallest towns. The parents of Winhall, a ski town, voted 4-1 to shut down their only public grammar school. They knew they would have to continue to send property taxes to Montpelier. But at least, now, the state would have little say in how they educated their children. They could use their $5,100 block grants as tuition at a new school, a private school they established. The block grant money wasn't enough for a new school — indeed, it was only one-seventh of the money the town was sending to Montpelier. But the parents decided they would raise the extra funds they needed by themselves and shut the state out.

Dover, a village with 719 voting souls, went another route. Voters there asked their selectmen to take citizens' property tax money and put it in escrow until Act 60 could be reviewed again. Soon, several other towns followed. "Our civil rebellion," one official deemed the tax revolt. By spring, seven towns had planned or were seriously considering holding back their money. Dover officials were the feistiest. "They can't build a jail big enough," Marylou Raymo, the clerk of Dover, told the *Wall Street Journal.*

Other towns were, at least for the moment, more hesitant. Montpelier had an entire armory of laws, rules, and lawyers with which to strike back. It too could withhold funds, funds the towns counted on to maintain roads in icy winters. So people looked for other avenues. In Dorset, locals met to ponder establishing a private charity to get around the high penalty they must pay if they wish to spend more through the public avenue. John Irving was so angry that he set about founding a private school, the Maple Street school, for his son and other disillusioned families. The school anticipated spending from $8,000 to $10,000 per child, or about the amount the town of Dorset was spending before equalization.

As for Mary Barrosse, she has come to the conclusion that "it has nothing to do with quality or equal education." People wouldn't mind paying property taxes, she knew, if they controlled those taxes to educate their children. Government might turn its back on that local connection if it chose. It might choose to forget about individual parents and pursue statewide spending equity, school standards, national reading programs — whatever goal seemed important in the powerful, abstract world of politics. But, as the Vermont school wars were proving, denying people a say also has its price.

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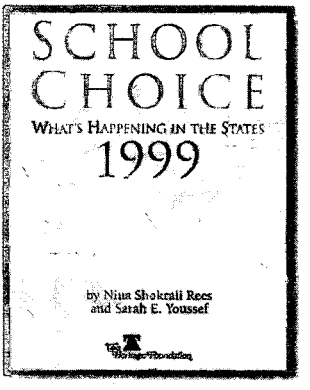

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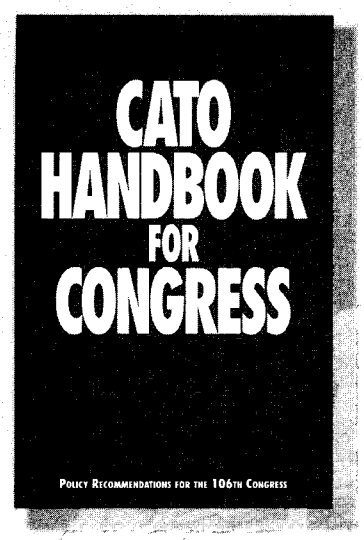

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BOOKS

God and Man in Full

By P.J. O'ROURKE

TOM WOLFE. *A Man in Full.* FARRAR STRAUS & GIROUX. 742 PAGES. $31.00

AMONG THE A-LIST big dogs of chic fiction, Tom Wolfe's *A Man in Full* is not da bomb. Of course, there's vulgar success against it — cover of *Time*, phone number first printing. Nothing ills the cool like being hot, except on the rare occasions when it happens to them. But novels by Clancy or Grisham usually pass beneath notice of the critical hepcats. *A Man in Full* didn't. Doyen of American letters-a-go-go, John Updike, dissed the text in that edgy journal the *New Yorker*. "Amounts to entertainment, not literature," sniffed the man who inked *The Witches of Eastwick*. Perennially def and slammin' Norman Mailer gave Wolfe a buzz kill in the fashion-forward *New York Review of Books*. "Chosen by the author to be a best seller rather than a major novel," slagged the caption-writer for *Marilyn, An Appreciation*. And then there was James Wood (so dope, so phat) in the *New Republic* (it's fresh, it's stylin'): "this bumptious simplicity, this toy-set of literary codes essentially indistinguishable from the narrative techniques of boys' comics." Jim, that's cold.

But there is, in fact, every reason for *A Man in Full* to be unfashionable. Big, sweeping social realism with themes of honor, duty, sin, and belief went out with honor, duty, sin, belief, and the big sweeping societies that had them. Wolfe has written an encomium of the *passé*, praising hope, reason, self-restraint, custom, shame, good taste, first marriages, and Booker T. Washington. His novel tells the story of failing real estate developer Charlie Croker, who is not only a moss-back personally, but is also that out-moded item, a protagonist who shows character development. This naff and antiquated progress is fostered by an escapee from unjust imprisonment, Conrad Hensley. He is a hero, a species long ago hunted to extinction in literary fiction. Of Hensley, Wolfe says — heaping back-number Pelion upon moldy Ossa — "To lead the bourgeois life was to be obsessed with order, moral rectitude, courtesy, cooperation, education, financial success, comfort, respectability, pride in one's offspring, and, above all, domestic tranquillity. To Conrad it sounded like heaven." And there's not one stylish sex scene in the book.

Tom Wolfe uses (what a fossil!) layers of symbolism and allegory. The name Conrad means "bold counselor." The Man of the title is a Charles ("manly") and a Croker because he's coarse. (A burlap bag is a "croker sack" in the South.) Plus Charles is a "croaker" since his manly identity is dying and also a "croaker" in that he becomes a sort of philosophical doc.

P.J. O'Rourke is author most recently of Eat the Rich: A Treatise on Economics.

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Charlie's second wife, the epicurian Serena, believes, like Epicurus with his serenity, "that everything that's sweet in this life ends when we die." An assimilated black is called Roger White. If that's not enough, Roger ("spearman") tries to shaft Charlie. And so on, in the most old-hat way, with nearly every moniker in the book.

And Wolfe's cornball allegiance to the Western canon must leave the with-it agape. *A Man in Full* has, per John Winthrop, its City upon a Hill (or its suburb, Buckhart, anyway). The Atlanta metropolitan area is Gibbon's Rome as well. There is the college football gladiator Fareek Fanon. (We who are about to sign sneaker endorsements salute you.) There is a (more or less) martyred (more or less) virgin sacrificed to Fareek's date-rape whims. There's bread (get-out-the-vote money) and circuses (the voting). The Bible comes into it, too, with a Tower of Babel at the PlannersBanc building and walls of Jericho around the Santa Rita Correction Center. Hundreds of other dead white guy allusions are made, such as references to Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* that reviewers were too up-to-date to catch. For the intellectually a la mode, *A Man in Full* is a regular Squaresville Great Books course out of some L-7 ivy hive like Washington and Lee circa early 1950s.

But it's badder than that. *A Man in Full* gives such offense to modish sensibilities that the modish haven't yet fully realized how offended they should be. While Wolfe is unfashionable in his method and scope, his real topic is so *outré* it can hardly be mentioned in polite society. *A Man in Full* is about church.

John Updike did notice that "the novel turns out to be all about religion." But then Updike claims, "In a post-Christian world, Wolfe offers us ... the nobility of Stoicism." Which is nonsense. The first thing that Conrad Hensley does, after deciding he's a stoic, is violate the tenets of stoicism with an act of Christian charity. And religion, in a denominational sense, is just a tag in the book, little more indicative of creed than an Armani label: "he was Jewish, which in Georgia meant that your paths weren't going to cross socially all that much." Nor is this a novel about blinding satori insights, born-again dramas, finding God out-of-body or inside self, or about any of the other spiritual slop that might make the theme acceptable to moderns — moderns whom Wolfe sums up in his description of Conrad's hippie mother, "a very pretty, sweet, sentimental, but terribly lax soul."

A Man in Full is about go-to-church church, about Sunday best, Sunday school, Sunday manners, Sunday dinner church. Get me to the church on time church. Church with convictions as deep and resonant as the snores during the sermon. Church with 2,000 years of loud in the hymns, quiet in the pews, $5 in the collection plate, and a big breakfast when we get home. A taken for granted, foregone conclusion church about which little need be said. And Tom Wolfe speaks for this church by saying little about it.

Church is central in its absence from *A Man in Full*. Fashionable Atlantans are seen in every kind of social gathering except the kind where they're scrubbed and sober and fumbling in the hymnal for "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." They don't disparage

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church. They wouldn't bother. In the one passage where Charlie Croker might be criticizing organized religion, where he's thinking about an institution that "had been the center of the most important network in the city" but now is "filled with old people who didn't mean much one way or another," he is referring to the Piedmont Driving Club.

Unfashionable Atlantans go to church — Roger White, for example, the African-American who (and what could be more unfashionable?) loves Western culture. The *declassé* go to church. Conrad Hensley rents a room from the fat, old, tooth-absent Munger siblings and they ask him, "You go to church?" Stoic Conrad replies, "I go to the church of Zeus."

"Sister'n'me's Methodists," says his landlord.

And the lumpen proletariat goes to church, in the ghetto, with the Reverend Isaac Blakey at the Church of the Sheltering Arms.

But the church-going isn't going well, even with the church-goers. The Rev. Blakey and his parishioners have been tempted in the wilderness of political activism and are praying to give Caesar what is Caesar's — right in the kisser. Roger White recalls the fancy altar goods and abstract stained glass in his own Uptown church and thinks that his minister father "would have seen all this for what it was: an attempt to look high-class." And the Mungers run an over-stuffed junk shop with the sadly resurrectional name, "Hello, Again." The scripture says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," let alone junk.

People who don't know what they should be doing — which in *A Man in Full* is all of them — wander outside the bounds of traditional piety seeking answers in the gym, the hospital, the ballot box, the bottle; in press conferences, art shows, the Piedmont Driving Club, and, indeed, in the colloquies of Epictetus. So ignorant is Conrad Hensley of, well, Jesus, for instance, that Conrad thinks of Epictetus as the only philosopher "who had been stripped of everything, imprisoned, tortured . . . threatened with death."

A Man in Full is about go-to-church church, about Sunday best, Sunday school, Sunday manners, Sunday dinner church. Get me to the church on time church.

However, to imagine that Wolfe is positing a pagan, or as Updike would have it "post-Christian," world is to miss what the author's been up to. By studying Epictetus, Conrad and Charlie are able to find a decent, if dour, system of ethics. But Wolfe is careful in his choice of stoics. He doesn't pick the 4th century B.C. founder, Zeno, who perforce had no exposure to Christianity, nor the Christian-persecuting Marcus Aurelius, whose prose would have made for better citation. He selects instead the stoic who lived at the beginning of the Christian era and who was the slave of a freedman of Nero, the emperor who crucified St. Peter. Epi-

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ctetus was the most spiritual of the stoics and his sayings imply monotheism. Yet Wolfe substitutes "Zeus" for "god" when Epictetus is quoted, thus emphasizing the differences between the good beliefs of stoicism and the better beliefs of the — with apology to the author — right stuff.

THERE'S NO ATTEMPT to improve on that stuff. Wolfe is hardly a Walk Toward the Light new age sage, or latter-day prophet either. Maybe Charlie Crocker and Conrad Hensley are meant to be Christ figures in their trials, punishments, and rebirths — Conrad is even joked about as "Messenger Connie, who'll soon be returning to Earth from wherever." But that "wherever" is a semi-detached home with the missus and the kids. And Charlie is "about to sign a syndication deal with Fox Broadcasting." These are Christ figures who are wholly inadequate, as well they should be since Christ exists already. Possible anti-Christs are even less impressive. Mute, stupid, merchandising-minded Fareek Fanon? Whore of Babylon Serena who, by book's end, is just one more single mom? The race-baiting politician, Andre "Balq" Fleet, winds up unelected. The sin-relishing banker, Raymond Peepgrass, finishes as a trophy husband.

A Man in Full, whose millennial time-frame goes pointedly unmentioned, is no updated Book of Revelations. Although Wolfe does create an evil double to a house of worship, "right across the street from the First Presbyterian Church." This is the basilica of *au courant* art, the High Museum. Writes Wolfe, "The museum was fiercely different from the church. The church, built in 1919, was a stately, dark, and stony neo-Gothic pile. The museum, built in 1983, was pure white and modern in the Corbusier mode."

"Looks like an insecticide refinery," says Atlanta's black, and presumably church-going, mayor.

Wolfe fills the museum with an exhibit of obscene paintings, has a sermon preached upon them by an advocate of that devil Michel Foucault, and puts the whole of swank Atlanta in the opening night dinner congregation, including a Baptist deacon. "A Baptist deacon!" thinks Charlie Croker. "True, Tabernacle Baptist was an In-Town Baptist church, a bit sophisticated, at least, as compared to a good old Foot-washing Baptist church out in the countryside, but Godalmighty, nevertheless — he was a Baptist deacon! — and he was looking at these pictures of . . . of . . ." But as Wolfe limns the scene it becomes clear that "le tout Atlanta" isn't really participating in the grisly parody of the mass. Le tout Atlanta is yacking among itself and not paying a bit of attention to Satan either.

And then *A Man in Full* comes to its much-panned ("perfunctory and inadequate," said John Updike) ending. One of the less important characters ties up some loose ends in an epiloguic chat. It's allusive, brief, abrupt and a bit mysterious — a conclusion much like the gospels have. Said the Apostle John: "And there were also so many other things . . . the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

Something is slouching toward Bethlehem (and Atlanta), all right, but it's no rough beast. It's something conventional, middle-class, blushing,

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staid, and as unfashionable as a church service.

Tom Wolfe gives the last line to Roger White, the fellow who's a fan of western civ but is, withal, an everyman, neither very bad nor very good, and who has been seduced by politics, which makes him feel like a "man of the world." From the mouth of this humble vessel come the words, "'Oh, don't worry,' said the man of the world, 'I'll be back.'"

A River Runs Dry

By Michael S. Greve

William G. Bowen and Derek Curtis Bok. *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions*. Princeton University Press. 384 pages. $24.95

As former presidents of Princeton and Harvard respectively, William G. Bowen and Derek Bok played leading roles in committing two of America's most prestigious institutions of higher learning to racial preferences in student admissions. Their collaborative effort last year, *The Shape of the River*, came billed as a turning point in the debate over affirmative action. In it, the authors examine the consequences of these policies and find that they and their colleagues at other elite colleges have done an outstanding job. "Race-sensitive" admission practices, they find, have been good for blacks, good for elite universities, and good for the country.

No other social science book has been promoted so lavishly and with such determination to alter public debate. The eminences who submitted dust jacket blurbs sing the praises of "race sensitivity," Bowen and Bok's euphemism for race preferences. With equal attention to detail, the manuscript was withheld from experts and journalists suspected of harboring critical views, while advance copies were mailed to media outlets and experts who could be relied on to provide an echo chamber. True to form, the *New York Times* devoted a page-length article to the book and its authors, printed excerpts, and endorsed the tome in an editorial.

There is a potent reason for the hype, the spin, and the eagerness with which so many have seized on *The Shape of the River*: The defenders of race-based preferences have been on a long, unbroken losing streak — in the courts, at the polls, and in the public debate. Demoralizing events of the past three years include a March 1996 appellate court decision in *Hopwood* v. *State of Texas*, which held that racial preferences in student admissions are virtually always unconstitutional and, in particular, that an alleged interest in

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racial "diversity" provides no warrant for such policies; the abolition of admission preferences at the University of California; the enactment of California's Proposition 209 in November 1996 and, in 1997, a strongly worded appellate court decision sustaining the measure; also in 1997, the filing of additional lawsuits against the University of Washington Law School and the University of Michigan; and, over the past year, successful constitutional challenges to race-based student assignments in primary and secondary education. In November 1998, a large majority of voters in the state of Washington approved a popular initiative barring race- and sex-based preferences at all public institutions in the state, including universities. Federal district courts in Georgia, New York, and, of all venues, the liberal First Circuit Court of Appeals joined the growing number of jurisdictions to declare racial preferences in education unconstitutional.

Bowen and Bok's own evidence suggests serious reservations about their cheerful conclusion that racial preferences 'work.'

Preference advocates have grown increasingly worried about the possibility of stopping this juggernaut. As first steps, they need to draw some line of defense and to shore up confidence in their own camp. *The Shape of the River* is an attempt to do just that. The book does indeed contain a mountain of data, including some previously unavailable information on race-based admission preferences and their consequences. However, it impresses mostly for the authors' obliviousness to the forces and arguments that have, for the better part of a decade, generated broad public and judicial support for official colorblindness.

Bowen and Bok's own evidence suggests serious reservations about their cheerful conclusion that racial preferences "work." The black students who graduate from elite institutions, we are told, earn a lot of money and, on the whole, feel good about themselves and their educational experience. All that, though, is also true of white graduates, except more so. Similarly, 61 percent of white students now get to "know well" two or more black students, whereas (the authors estimate) only 53 percent would if the number of black students were cut as a consequence of race-neutral policies. Either way, elite colleges seem to fall short of the larger American polity, where 86 percent of whites say they have black friends. But one does not learn this from *The Shape of the River*.

One does learn, if one did not already know, that college campuses are marred by racial tensions. Bowen and Bok emphasize what they take to be the bright side, even going so far as to rationalize that "it is often through racial slights, misunderstandings, and disagreements that minds are opened and the understanding of differences enlarged." (One wonders if the LAPD has heard the news.) But the facts remain

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discouraging. One in four black admittees to elite colleges fails to graduate, compared to 14 percent of whites, and the disparities in drop-out rates increase with the colleges' selectivity. Black students earn grades that on average place them at the twenty-third percentile of their class, and the average includes those who would have been admitted under race-neutral standards. The authors express concern over this fact, but they never really address it, preferring instead such relativistic generalizations as "by any standard, the achievements of the black matriculants have been impressive." Many pages and charts later, the evidence of high achievement by blacks is "overwhelming."

Bowen and Bok mean to encourage "defensive or disillusioned" university administrators "who have worked hard to increase minority enrollments." Demoralized educrats do need cheering up, and perhaps this book will help. But outside the groves of academe and the liberal civil rights lobby, *The Shape of the River* has failed to reshape the affirmative action debate. It has produced no significant rethinking among opponents of racial preferences. Anti-preference civil rights organizations such as Linda Chavez's Center for Equal Opportunity and Ward Connerly's American Civil Rights Institute promptly published effective responses. Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom have dissected the book's claims in a devastating review (*Commentary*, February 1999).

Though its intentions are clearly otherwise, *The Shape of the River* may in fact accelerate the trend toward official colorblindness. The most fundamental reason is that while Bowen and Bok's consequentialist argument may succeed in "informing" the debate (as the authors hope), it cannot change the terms of a debate that is fought, on both sides and for good reason, primarily over constitutional and moral principle.

For instance, Bowen and Bok argue that the demise of racial preferences would only marginally increase white or Asian applicants' chances of admission. Among thousands of non-minority applicants who think they were displaced by racial preferences, according to them only a handful were in fact displaced. Even on purely utilitarian grounds, this argument cuts both ways, since the perception itself is a serious social cost. Leaving that aside, though, the argument is unlikely to impress "reverse" discrimination plaintiffs, the courts that entertain their claims, or the voters. It is a lot like saying that on those crowded Southern buses, most blacks wouldn't have obtained whites-only seats anyhow. The argument presupposes that the principle isn't terribly important in the first place.

Most people bend or break with principle only when the consequences of adherence become too awful to contemplate. And so Bowen and Bok paint a dreadful picture of the consequences that would ensue from race-neutral practices. Echoing the central defense of racial preferences in *Hopwood* and subsequent lawsuits, they warn of virtually-all-white-and-yellow colleges from here to what might as well be eternity. They also contend that elite college graduates "with advanced degrees are the backbone of the emergent black and Hispanic middle class." Their data do not remotely support that claim. In America, the black middle class

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"emerged" decades ago, which explains why 86 percent of black admittees in Bowen and Bok's sample *already* came from middle- or upper-class backgrounds. As the Thernstroms observe, a few hundred elite school graduates — who, as Bowen and Bok concede, would have led successful lives even without Harvard degrees — hardly amount to the "backbone" of a middle class of over 10 million members.

Voters and judges, fortunately, do not believe that a handful of elite institutions are as important to the country's well-being as the authors of *The Shape of the River* make them out to be. At the time, the demise of racial preferences in Texas and California produced jeremiads about the decline of minority enrollment at flagship institutions in those states. But the hoped-for backlash against race-neutral admission standards never materialized. Bowen and Bok's evidence of the dire consequences of abolishing racial preferences is far too inconclusive to persuade anyone but higher education administrators, who need no persuading.

The book does, however, establish two points in the opposite direction. First, competitive colleges and universities administer very substantial racial preferences. Upwards of 60 percent of all black students at elite colleges owe their admission to such policies. Second, Bowen and Bok explain that elite institutions administer racial preferences *for the purpose of boosting black enrollments.*

While higher education experts have known these facts for well over two decades, judges, prospective plaintiffs, and the public have not. Curiously, the authors seem not to recognize that their own findings undermine their cause in the institutional venues where their arguments might matter. For the courts, "getting the numbers up" is discrimination for its own sake, which is *verboten.* So, too, with discrimination for broad societal objectives: It is unconstitutional per se. Voters, for their part, tend to ask whether those white kids who sue universities would have been admitted had they been black. *The Shape of the River* strongly confirms the suspicion that *of course* they would have — and that the same is true of thousands of others. This is all most citizens need or want to know about race "sensitive" practices.

SENSING PERHAPS that their empiricist argument can't do the job, the authors end their book with a string of bare assertions. Colorblind practices are "unworthy of our country's ideals." We must not turn back from efforts to integrate blacks into "the mainstream of American life." A few sentences later, the remedial argument for race preferences, otherwise ignored throughout the book, makes an appearance — coupled with a reaffirmation of Harvard's role as the nation's conscience: Racial preferences at elite colleges "will encourage others to press on with the hard work needed to overcome the continuing effects of a legacy of unfair treatment." Besides (and still in the same paragraph), racial neutrality would induce despair among blacks, which "seems a high price to pay for a tiny increase in the probability of admission for white applicants" to elite institutions. Thus does the moral imagination shaped at Harvard reduce an argument over principle to a disagreement over probability distributions.

Bowen and Bok attempt to clinch

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their case by insisting on "The Importance of Institutional Autonomy." American universities, they proclaim, are great because the government respects their autonomy, and that autonomy *must* encompass a license to engage in practices that in every other arena constitute race discrimination. Otherwise, highly selective colleges that are faced with a choice between color-blindness and elite aspirations will either lower admission standards or find furtive ways around obnoxious legal commands to cease discrimination. As the authors observe, "it is very difficult to stop people from finding a path toward a goal in which they firmly believe." True enough; that is exactly why Southerners of an earlier generation discovered literacy tests.

Bowen and Bok urge that we trust our elite colleges to administer racial preferences sensibly. Institutional safeguards, we are promised, ensure that they will do so:

> University faculties and administrators know that they will have to live with their mistakes, and this realization acts as a restraint on hasty, ill-conceived policies. The admission practices of colleges and professional schools are highly visible, and there is no lack of individuals and entities ready to criticize their results.

After 285 pages of circumlocutions, these preposterous falsehoods come almost as a relief. In the academy, there is only one "mistake": No provost or dean at a prestige institution can afford to question the "diversity" orthodoxy, which is why none have done so. As for the "visibility" of college admission practices, the nation's elite schools have in fact harassed students (such as Georgetown Law School's Timothy Maguire) who made the data visible. They have doctored documents and submitted perjured testimony, as University of Texas officials did in *Hopwood*. If the affirmative action debate has been uninformed by the sort of evidence presented in *The Shape of the River*, that is not because researchers, advocates, or the public lacked interest in the data, but because universities did everything in their power to keep the data secret. Bowen and Bok themselves will not permit independent researchers access to their "restricted access database."

Behind the obsession with race and "diversity" lies a kernel of good sense: *Public* universities, at least, have a democratic or (in James Q. Wilson's phrase) "representational" function. We do not like public institutions that serve only a select few. By definition, though, elite universities won't be representational by any measure, be it race or religion or income. Elite public education redistributes income and life chances *upward*: Students at the University of Virginia (one of the most demanding public universities in the country) are being subsidized by taxpayers who will be lucky to see Mr. Jefferson's institution as tourists. There may be a case for subsidizing the education of heart surgeons or nuclear physicists. But one is hard-pressed to articulate an argument for subsidizing the education of predominantly wealthy kids who will go on to become even wealthier lawyers.

There is an equally serious argument, albeit another one these authors

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do not address, for the autonomy of private colleges. America's (mostly private) elite universities are the envy of the world, whereas our overwhelmingly public K-12 system is a mess. Public institutions must adhere to the Constitution and to public norms distilled in uniform laws and regulations, with all the attendant rigidities. Perhaps we should repeal the civil rights laws that tie private institutions to constitutional commands and let those institutions be truly private. Let each define its own mission and admission standards. Let there be institutional choice and (for lack of a better word) diversity.

Regardless of one's views of the merits of these arguments, their forthright consideration would enrich an often sterile debate. Conservatives and liberals alike should be concerned about the redistributive implications of public higher education. Both camps, too, ought to respect the autonomy of private or privatized institutions. The captains of higher education could do worse than to query whether we really need a public Boalt Hall to produce white-shoe lawyers; whether Harvard and Columbia really need to pine for federal subsidies to the point of becoming well-nigh indistinguishable from the University of Alaska.

Such a debate, though, would present and eventually demand choices — between elitism and representation; between public and private; between Harvard's autonomy and its claim to be a model to America. Bowen and Bok, however, want the best of all worlds. They want elite institutions with a multi-chromatic veneer. They want diversity — so long as it conforms to their definition. They want private autonomy for Harvard, Princeton, and the University of Michigan — on the taxpayers' nickel. They want permission to discriminate — and yet harangue everyone else for latent racism.

In the end, all the data and charts and graphs in *The Shape of the River* cannot camouflage the brazen arrogance of the authors' demand for our money and our gratitude and an exemption from the rules that apply to everyone else. They can forget it.

Jolly Ex-Friends for Evermore

By Arnold Beichman

Norman Podhoretz. *Ex-Friends: Falling Out with Allen Ginsberg, Lionel and Diana Trilling, Lillian Hellman, Hannah Arendt, and Norman Mailer.* Free Press. 256 pages. $25.00

There are plenty of reasons why I should disqualify myself as a reviewer of Norman Podhoretz's sensitively and beautifully composed autobiographical chapter. I am mentioned favorably three times in this book. I've known the author for some four decades. During that time I have been friend, ex-friend and friend again. I knew him before

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Arnold Beichman is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution. He is preparing a political biography of Henry A. Wallace.

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and after he became editor of *Commentary* magazine. We became ex-friends because of his lamentable lurch to the left in the late 1950s. We then became friends anew when he saw the light some years later in the late 1960s. I have favorably reviewed several of his political books but not his earlier autobiographical volumes, *Making It* and *Breaking Ranks*, which cost him a lot of friendships but not mine. We dine regularly when I am in New York and are devoted e-mail correspondents.

I have no problem writing about Podhoretz now because at 68, he is not just a friend but an historic figure as well. He was and still is one of the most influential intellectuals of our time, comfortable in letters as well as politics and a scourge of left-liberalism. He is probably one of the most accomplished politico-literary polemicists of modern times; he takes no prisoners.

In 1982 he published an article in the *New York Times Magazine* entitled "The Neo-Conservative Anguish over Reagan's Foreign Policy." He was critical of what was perceived by some conservatives, neos and paleos alike, as the president's softness toward Soviet policies in the pre-Gorbachev period. So concerned was Reagan about this "anguish" that he phoned Podhoretz to discuss the article.

Now what was there about Podhoretz and his little magazine (*Commentary*'s circulation never topped 80,000) that would impel the president of the United States to phone and argue with this particular critic of his foreign policy? Perhaps President Reagan, a one-time New Deal liberal, saw in Podhoretz someone with a similar history of progress from left to right and, therefore, a kinsman. Or perhaps it was because in the ideological wars of the 1970s and 1980s, Podhoretz had become an intellectual force who by himself and through his magazine contributed mightily to the global victory against communism. (I would include among other contributors Midge Decter, his wife, for the salience of her writings in this period and for her leadership of the Committee for the Free World.)

Richard Gid Powers recognized Podhoretz's distinction a few years ago in his book, *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anticommunism.* It was Podhoretz in the post-Nixon, post-detente era of the mid-70s who "summoned the will, the strength and the imagination to commence the giant task of rebuilding the anti-communist coalition," Powers wrote.

Podhoretz was for 35 years editor of *Commentary*, then a publication of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), which promised its editor full independence. In that time he took *Commentary* and made the monthly an integral part of the American socio-political scene, building on the work of its founding editor, Elliot Cohen, before his tragic death. The AJC, however, was not always pleased with Podhoretz's unyielding brand of anti-communism or with his cultural ideals. In fact, some AJC board members were so displeased that they plotted to remove him from his editorial post. I took pleasure at the time in describing these plots in a long article in William F. Buckley Jr.'s *National Review.*

THE SIX EX-FRIENDS he writes about here, all Jewish (at least ethnically) and all residents, on and off, of New York City,

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are: Hannah Arendt, the philosopher; Allen Ginsberg, the poet; Lillian Hellman, the playwright; Norman Mailer, the novelist; and Lionel and Diana Trilling, politico-literary critics. With the exception of Mailer, now 76, his other ex-friends are all dead. Along with other literary intellectuals, they were members of what Podhoretz calls "The Family," a loosely defined assemblage of New York intellectuals, more or less anti-Soviet, pro-Freud (Arendt, *inter alia*, excepted) and grouped around three magazines, *Partisan Review*, *New Leader*, and, of course, *Commentary*. The main requirement for admission to the Family, says Podhoretz, was "brilliance." Through his friendships with these and other "ex-friends" like Hans Morgenthau, Dwight Macdonald and Mary McCarthy, Podhoretz has given us a view of the "bloody crossroads," where literature and politics meet, at least in Manhattan.

The main requirement for admission to the Family was 'brilliance.' Podhoretz gives us a view of the 'bloody crossroads,' where literature and politics meet.

When I finished reading this memoir I asked myself: how could Podhoretz have sustained a friendship with someone like Ginsberg, fine poet though he might be, but also sex pervert, druggie, probably a pederast, and an impassioned America-hater? How could Podhoretz have remained such a devoted friend of a bitchy Stalinist like Lillian Hellman — who, despite the ghastly revelations from Conquest to Solzhenitsyn and even Khrushchev of what Stalinism meant, never recanted? While I can think of some redeeming quality in Ginsberg, I cannot think of a single one for dear old Lillian; nor, it seems, can most of her biographers. For me, the injunction *de mortuis nil nisi bonum* does not apply to unrepentant Stalinists.

In some ways, Podhoretz's relationship with Lillian Hellman is the most difficult to understand. He acknowledges his guilt over the "unsavory trick" of pretending in private conversations with her to admire the playwright's work, something he says he would never have written in the public prints, for that would have been self-betrayal. Whenever he praised her work to her face, he says he felt "ashamed and more than a little disgusted with myself." He says that he misses Hellman, "an incomparable playmate with whom I had so much fun — more than perhaps I had with any of my other ex-friends — that I was able, for what seems an amazingly long time, to overlook the flaws in her writing and to forget about the evils of her politics." I never thought I would ever think of Podhoretz as a toy-boy.

The answer to my own question about Podhoretz's friendships is this:

In *bildungsroman* (or "young man from the provinces") novels, the hero (or anti-hero) knowingly abandons the moral life. He dishonors himself by going in for drugs or notorious women or big money swindles or connections in high places — whatever — so as to

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reach some desired pinnacle that will perhaps make his sickening behavior all worthwhile. Rousseau's *Confessions* details some contemptible behavior on his part; the philosopher meant to tell all about himself and he did. Podhoretz has taken as a model Jean-Jacques' tell-all intellectual journey. Thus his painfully honest description of his spooky friendships with Ginsberg and Hellman — and his even more instructive friendship with Norman Mailer. As George Orwell once said: "Autobiography is only to be trusted when it reveals something disgraceful. A man who gives a good account of himself is probably lying, since any life when viewed from the inside is simply a series of defeats." And that is what makes Podhoretz's memoir so engrossing and even refreshing: he snatched victories from the "series of defeats" Orwell talked about because of impeccable timing: Podhoretz knew when to get out, when enough was enough.

Somewhere I remember from my own Talmudic studies the story of how the devil, assuming the pleasing shape of a beautiful woman, so tempted a rabbi that he began to undress. As he doffed his shirt, his *tzitzes* (or "fringes," an undergarment worn by orthodox Jews) began miraculously to slap the rabbi's face. He immediately came to his senses and drove away the devil in disguise. Some may say that Podhoretz's *tshuba* (or return) was opportunism. I don't think so. I think his luminous intelligence and his reasserted moral sense, derived in part from years of Jewish religious studies, served as Podhoretz's *tzitzes*.

Podhoretz describes with a bruising candor his "sexual restlessness" in his early marital years. Despite Mailer's attempts to involve him in sex orgies, Podhoretz writes, "by the early 1970s [I had] decided that the radical ideas in the sexual realm with which I had been playing around were no less pernicious than their counterparts in the world of politics and I had now returned for good to my old set of beliefs in marital fidelity and everything that went with it."

But it took time before he found his way back from Mailerite mores to his currently treasured "old . . . beliefs." When Mailer, having stabbed Adele, one of his many wives, went into hiding from the police, he came to Podhoretz, his "foul-weather friend" (Mailer's phrase), for help. But not to escape arrest. Oh no. When he surrendered himself, Mailer wanted to avoid institutionalization via a probable court-ordered psychiatric examination. After all, to be declared blameless in a felonious assault by reason of insanity would — heaven forfend! — hurt his reputation as a writer. That was as much a matter of concern, if not more so, than the life of poor Adele, recuperating in a hospital from the wound. But long before he stabbed Adele, Mailer was already defending juvenile murderers in his essay, "The White Negro," with the statement that by committing murder "the hoodlum is therefore daring the unknown." Fortunately for Adele, Mailer didn't have the courage of his "hoodlum" convictions.

"OF ALL THE ELDERS in the Family, there were none for whom I had a higher regard than Hannah."

So writes Podhoretz about Hannah Arendt's brilliance, which he defines in these words: "the virtuosic ability to put ideas together in such new and ex-

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citing combinations that even if one disagreed with what was being said, one was excited and illuminated."[1] For him, Arendt and her "agile synthesizing mind" achieved the attributes of brilliance and originality with her book, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, which as a 21-year-old he found in 1951 and read with ever-growing excitement. The book theorized that communism and Nazism were, in Podhoretz's words, "brothers under the skin." Arendt was trying to establish the moral equivalence of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

It was only years later when Arendt published "Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil" (first as a series of five articles in the *New Yorker* and later as a book) that he learned, says Podhoretz, that "originality was not so great an intellectual virtue as I had once thought . . . [and] there was nothing admirable about brilliance in itself."

The Arendt chapter is clearly the most important to Podhoretz because Arendt's writings and public positions, as well as the anti-Israel New Left, forced him to address his own doubts about his Jewishness and the state of Israel. He once expressed these doubts in a single, jarring question:

> In thinking about the Jews I have often wondered if their survival as a distinct group was worth one hair on the head of a single infant. Did the Jews have to survive that six million innocent people should one day be burned in the ovens of Auschwitz? It is a terrible question, and no one, not God Himself, could ever answer it to my satisfaction.

Readers of this confessional, which might just as easily have been titled "The Many Lives of Norman Podhoretz," will single out one "friendship" as more interesting than another. I, for one, found the chapter on Lionel Trilling, Columbia University's famed literary critic, and his wife, Diana, most absorbing, especially the report of a highly charged dinner party at my New York Upper West Side apartment in the mid-1960s. In a bridge-building endeavor, I had invited the Trillings and the Podhoretzes to see if I could make peace between them. Woe unto the peacemakers, indeed. Despite Lionel's soothing post-prandial remark that at least we all had common assumptions, the party ended with Podhoretz's denial that they had any "common assumptions." Those were indeed heady days.

Podhoretz was a Trilling protege and it was Trilling who first brought him to the attention of the *Commentary* editors. The Trillings themselves had been mild fellow-travelers in the late 1920s but had then turned and become hardline anti-communists. It was Mrs. Trilling, however, who throughout the 1950s and 1960s was the clamorous anti-communist activist in the Family. It was she who, in a mordant essay on J. Robert Oppenheimer, wrote that "a staunch anti-communism was the great moral-political imperative of our epoch." It was a commanding and courageous precept from an American

[1] Podhoretz may have admired Hannah Arendt, but it turns out from her published correspondence that she may have been pretending to admire his writings, just as he pretended to admire Lillian Hellman's.

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intellectual, written at the zenith of Soviet power and in defiance of America's seemingly omnipotent anti-anti-communist adversary culture.

As chairman of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, she publicly protested a 1956 British magazine article by Bertrand Russell in which he denounced the United States as a dictatorship (run by J. Edgar Hoover, no less). The parent organization, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, reprimanded her for daring to attack Russell, since the philosopher was an honorary chairman of the congress. It was then that Mrs. Trilling fired off to the parent congress a brutal question: "How untruthful about America may a man be and still be useful to an organization which is pledged to truth and which numbers among its affiliates an American branch?" (None of this is in Podhoretz's book. I include these episodes here simply to demonstrate how far in later years the Trillings retreated from their hard-line position.)

The Trillings flinched when they looked into what they saw as the abyss and realized where their "staunch anti-Communism" might lead them: away from soft, mushy Jimmy Carter anti-anti-communist liberalism[2] to what under the captaincy of Irving Kristol became not merely neoconservatism but which, programmatically, led inevitably to support of Ronald Reagan against Carter. Had Carter been re-elected in 1980 the world today would be far different.[3] The Trillings turned back from the brink.

THE BREAK between the *bildungsroman* Podhoretz, the "young man from the provinces," and the Trillings came over the first volume of his biography, *Making It*. This book, as Podhoretz describes it, "unapologetically told the story of my own hunger for success, and it was he [Trilling], after all, who had first taught me that ambition, far from being the shameful 'bourgeois' passion that so many literary people professed to believe it was, actually testified to a commendable spiritedness of character." What infuriated the Family was that Podhoretz was spilling their "dirty little secret" to the whole world.

Now this reaction sounds balmy, but there it was. I was present at a salon where some leading intellectuals agreed that the Podhoretz book, which was yet to be published but which had been gossiped about for weeks, proved that the author had suffered a nervous breakdown and it was now only a question of whether he would ever recover his sanity. To top it all off, the

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2 It was at such a time that President Carter proudly announced that thanks to his efforts "[the American people] are now free of that inordinate fear of communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in our fear." And there was the memorable idiocy of Carter's secretary of state, Cyrus Vance: "Leonid Brezhnev is a man who shares our dreams and aspirations."

3 I have always regarded it as a measure of God's grace towards the American people that Harry Truman was nominated at the 1944 Democratic presidential convention to replace Vice President Henry A. Wallace. Had that substitution not occurred and assuming that FDR would have won a fourth term, Stalin would have had his man in the White House on April 12, 1945, the day FDR died.

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original publisher who had given Podhoretz a hefty advance now refused to publish the book.

What the change finally came down to was that Podhoretz in the 1980s saw the welded relationship in the larger world between moral ideas and practical politics, particularly as the Cold War became a hot war and there seemed no end to Soviet expansionism. It was then that the once left Podhoretz became the "ex-friend" of the new Podhoretz. Unlike such liberal leftists as Irving Howe, Podhoretz saw when the McGovernites took over the Democratic Party in 1972 that it was time to enter the real world of decision making — not, as Reinhold Niebuhr put it, to cheerily adopt "the strategy of fleeing from difficult problems by taking refuge in impossible solutions." Podhoretz's 1976 *Commentary* article "Making the World Safe for Communism" was an attack on liberal foreign policy and Republican proponents of detente that came just in the nick of time.

For one shining moment, there was the Family, though not quite a Camelot of knightly intellectuals. I, too, have a sense of nostalgia for the 1950s and 1960s, where in Manhattan you could always find a parking space on the very street on which you lived, where there were weekday cocktail galas for just published novelists and weekend dinner parties for visiting British intellectuals. For me, visions of Camelot ended in late 1969 at a crowded Trilling cocktail party, when I heard in a far corner of the living room a loud voice cry out, "Dammit, I can't sell, I'm locked in, the capital gains would kill me."

But it was great while it lasted, and we can thank that "nice Jewish boy from Brooklyn," as Podhoretz sardonically describes himself, for having recorded it in such Balzacian detail.

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LETTERS

Other Questions on Choice

SIR,—I was gratified and excited to see your journal focus on alternatives in education (January/February 1999). However, not one article questioned the premise of publicly funded education. Choosing between a voucher plan and the current public school paradigm is like choosing between Russian capitalism and Albanian capitalism. Both are poor choices, though one might prefer one over the other.

While a voucher or charter school plan with open enrollment would be less onerous than the current system of public education, each is predicated on the same redistributionist principles that animate other government programs. If public schools are the educational equivalent of nationalized health care, then vouchers are educational food stamps.

Health is a far more basic good for children than education, but we do not have regional health monopolies financed by taxpayers. The education of the young is too important to be left to agents of the state, whether at the federal, state, county, or municipal level.

Competition comes from the free market. As many Russians are now learning, reform does not necessarily mean freedom. Vouchers would reform our current state monopoly system, but they would not give us true choice. Admittedly, taking government out of the education business is a radical proposal. Your journal could provide an important service by tackling some of the tougher questions on choice like the separation of school and state, the benefits of home schooling, and alternatives in education funding.

TIMOTHY FRANCIS REISERT
Phoenix, Ariz.

SIR,—Your issue on school choice contains many convincing arguments, but I would like to suggest another. It is the *right* of parents to freely choose the kind of education they desire for their children. Due to the public school monopoly, parents have forgotten that they have a right to educate their children as they see fit. Advocates of school choice should press this point.

Most of the arguments for school choice rest on the worthy goal of a "better education for all children." That is fine as far as it goes. But millions of parents believe that good education includes religious instruction for the full development of the human personality. Parents and their children who have no other recourse but to attend public schools are denied the opportunity to receive daily religious instruction as a part of the curriculum. The public school system is basically flawed when every day it denies both the rights of parents to educate and the rights of students to receive instruction according to their religious conscience. We must have the courage to make this argument.

MAE DUGGAN
President
Citizens for Educational Freedom
St. Louis, Mo.

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Leveraging Educrats

SIR,—As Nina Shokraii Rees argues in "Public School Benefits of Private School Vouchers" (January/February 1999), vouchers are, indeed, a potent catalyst for change. In New York City, for example, after 23,000 families applied for 12,300 privately funded scholarships, schools Chancellor Rudy Crew admitted that he got parents' message loud and clear that public schools need to get better.

A few weeks later, Crew was more emphatic about the need to improve public education. "We don't have a lot of time, which is why I feel this incredible urgency. I think we have ten years, tops, to turn the system around before the public gets fed up and begins to replace it with something else."

Considering that the public school system has by and large been perennially immune from competition, the leverage that vouchers provide for stimulating public school improvement is enormous.

PAUL F. STEIDLER
The Lexington Institute
Arlington, Va.

SIR,—Your readers may care to know that Ohio was the first state to sanction the use of faith-based institutions as "choice schools," and we await our Supreme Court ruling of approval.

In addition, Ohio has been a pioneer in the charter school movement. Former Gov. George Voinovich and his education committee chair, industrialist David Brennan, deserve much of the credit for Ohio's successful community schools program. In recent months, 10 such community schools have been established by the legislature and approved by the school board. Many of these schools offer unique approaches in pedagogy, while others are quite traditional. In the rising tide favoring school choice, the charter school movement should not be forgotten as a means of bringing better education and more choice to children who desperately need it.

CHARLES BYRNE
District 11 School Board
Cleveland Heights, Ohio

A Misdiagnosis

SIR,—At best, William Mattox Jr.'s article ("Bawling Alone," September/October 1998) is misleading; at worst, it is dangerous. He compares levels of clinical depression in the Great Depression to levels of depression today. Clinical depression was not diagnosed during the Great Depression, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) had not been developed, and we had no tools to determine when someone was suffering from clinical depression.

Mattox makes the point that much of the clinical depression today is the result of our mass media culture, which he believes is oriented towards "gloom and pessimism." Oh, if only it were that simple. Millions of dollars have been spent investigating the causes of clinical depression. We have found that clinical depression is related to genetic vulnerability and chemical changes in the brain.

One of Mattox's most inflammatory statements, "the rise of clinical depression, then, is directly related to the decline of civil society," is without a doubt simply untrue. Volumes of scientific research show otherwise. The sim-

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plistic notion that once people show more loyalty toward "God, country, community, family, and virtue" clinical depression will disappear, shows how far astray the author has gone.

As a conservative and professional in the field, I am ashamed of such diatribes and hope that in the future the editors will consult some national experts in the field of depression. I shudder to think that people who suffer from clinical depression may decide to forgo standard treatment in favor of trying to change their attitudes about God and country. Clinical depression is a very painful illness and should not be made light of by this journal.

JOHN R. BELCHER
School of Social Work
University of Maryland
Baltimore, Md.

Scare Tactics

SIR,—Despite the lucidity of arguments that school vouchers are constitutional, such as Nathan Lewin's ("Are Vouchers Constitutional?" January/February 1999), liberals still find trojan horses where none exist. In a recent televised debate, the ACLU's Ira Glasser argued that tax dollars should not be used to help send children to schools that will "indoctrinate" them with the religious beliefs of those schools. This assumes that indoctrination is a foregone conclusion of the educational process. But this is not so, as many can attest. A member of my own extended family attended parochial primary and secondary schools and graduated from a Catholic university. Today, by his own choice, he is a Unitarian. Glasser's and the public school establishment's "indoctrination" argument is a silly scare tactic that insults the intelligence of all those involved.

PAUL GODREAU
Lowell, Mass.

Regionalism Debated

SIR,—In a recent edition of *Policy Review*, Steven Hayward misrepresents my view of regionalism ("Legends of the Sprawl," September/October 1998). Hayward has clearly not read my book and does not recognize that present-day regionalism is as much a Republican theme as a Democratic one.

Hayward argues that regionalism is based in 1960's Democratic liberalism. (Liberalism is a derogatory adjective in nearly every paragraph of Hayward's article.) In chapter six of my book *Metropolitics* and at great length, I specifically reject the traditional liberal approach to urban renewal and carefully note its shortfalls. Furthermore, some of the most successful legislative efforts and worthy argument for regionalism have come from conservatives like Newt Gingrich, Pat Robertson, Oregon Gov. Tom McCall, and Indiana's Richard Lugar. Regionalism, as conceived by Republicans, was and is an elegant limited-government response to the problem of wasteful sprawl and interlocal fiscal disparity

Hayward says that Minnesota's Gov. Arne Carlson vetoed "the few of Orfield's bills that have reached his desk." Yet again, Hayward is in error. Republican Gov. Carlson was a strong regionalist; he signed several of my bills and

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has supported progress on every front on which I have initiated action. Sometimes, I have had to settle for compromises. This is the nature of politics.

Hayward notes that the biggest problem with "regionalists like Orfield" is that we fail to note the salutary efficiency of hundreds of units of local government but instead lean on land-use powers hyper-regulating one regional land, housing, and labor market. He glories in 262 municipalities in Chicago — or twice that many in Philadelphia — of highly varying competencies, fighting for malls, car dealerships, and 4,000 square foot houses. It is a clear directive of God and Adam Smith, Hayward believes, that each of these places, no matter how small, have its own police, park, road building crew, and administrative bureaucracies, no matter how much duplication or inefficiency may occur.

In the past, I have found no experience more gratifying or productive than an honest debate with careful conservatives. In the legislature, this is a daily occurrence, and while I am a Democrat, some of my best friends and most admired colleagues in that body are careful conservatives. When I was at the University of Chicago law school and on its law review in the 1980s, I often found myself in disagreement with more conservative professors and editors. However, these conservatives cared about facts. They sought to understand my views before trying to trash them. Their arguments were constructed with a careful, sharp pen, not a sloppy tar brush.

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THE AUTHOR RESPONDS,

Having charged that that I am not a careful reader and that I misrepresent his position, Myron Orfield then proceeds to mischaracterize my position, all the while ignoring the most substantial arguments I made against ambitious regionalism and intensive government land-use planning. Perhaps a restatement is in order:

Orfield apparently didn't read to the end of my article, where I wrote, "Regional approaches to metropolitan problems and new urban forms of development may make sense under certain circumstances." In general, however, the kind of hyper-regionalism Orfield champions runs against the desire for local self-determination that fuels the push for devolution. If anything, the trend of the future may be to break up big cities into smaller units, just as the San Fernando Valley is trying to secede from Los Angeles. Is Brooklyn better off and better governed for having been absorbed by New York City a century ago? Which cities are better governed and more dynamic: Los Angeles, or the landlocked cities within its borders, such as Burbank and Culver City (not to mention its thriving adjacent "inner ring" suburbs such as Long Beach, Glendale, and Pasadena)?

Orfield wildly exaggerates when he says I "glory" in 262 municipalities in Chicago — I said no such thing — yet it is always revealing to me that liberals selectively decry inefficiency and duplication where the remedy would be more centralized government power, but never on issues where the remedy would mean less government power (i.e., the public schools, or the Davis-Bacon Act). The main reason for municipal competition is not efficiency or

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simple home rule per se, but the fact that municipal competition spurs different mixes of public services and costs, rather than obliterating urban diversity under a one-size-fits-all regionalism.

The most disingenuous aspect of Orfield's letter is his characterization of the politics of the issue. Holding out Oregon's Tom McCall as an example of Republican conservatism makes about as much sense as pointing to George Wallace as a model of Democratic liberalism. More insincere is Orfield's praise of Gov. Carlson as a strong regionalist who supported rather than opposed Orfield's agenda. In his book, Orfield complains that Carlson's re-election in 1994 "effectively postponed sweeping regional reforms for at least four years" (page 141), he complains that Carlson twice vetoed an Orfield housing bill, and he says that Carlson "was forced to sign" a tax-sharing bill only because it was included in a larger tax bill that had to be enacted. "In the end," Orfield writes, "I was saddened that the governor had put an end to so many worthy initiatives" (page 155). Hardly a ringing endorsement. Perhaps Orfield will fare better under Gov. Ventura.

Finally, I can't help note Orfield's observation that "liberalism is a derogatory adjective in nearly every paragraph of Hayward's article." Yes. Your point being?

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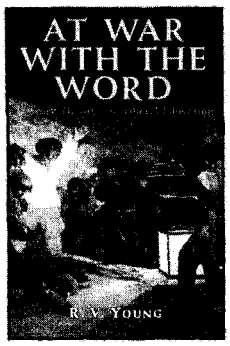

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